

SMOKESHOP

THE INDUSTRY AUTHORITY ON SPECIALTY TOBACCO RETAILING

SMOKESHOPMAG.COM | JUNE 2019

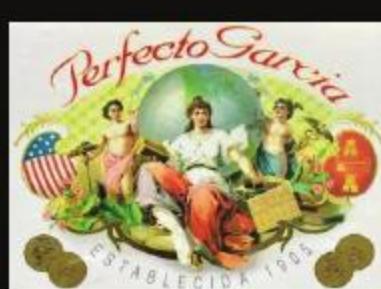


Capital Cigar Lounge:
Big City Style, Service
Lands in Middle America

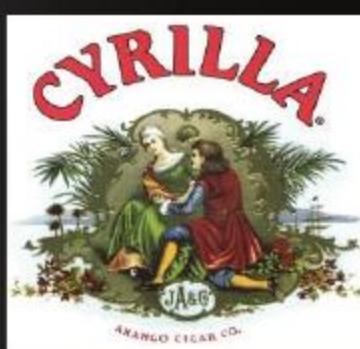
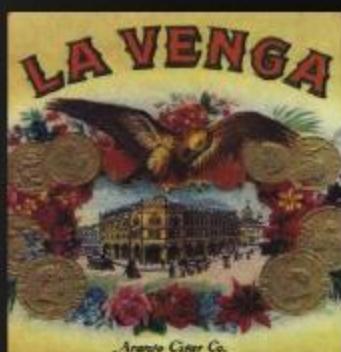
Plus:

- General Cigar's *La Gloria Cubana* brand gets a big push in 2019
- Honduran Trailblazer Julio Eiroa keeps classic blending alive at JRE Tobacco
- The future of pipes could be bright, if change is embraced, opportunities seized

FAVORITES



TORINO



CREDO



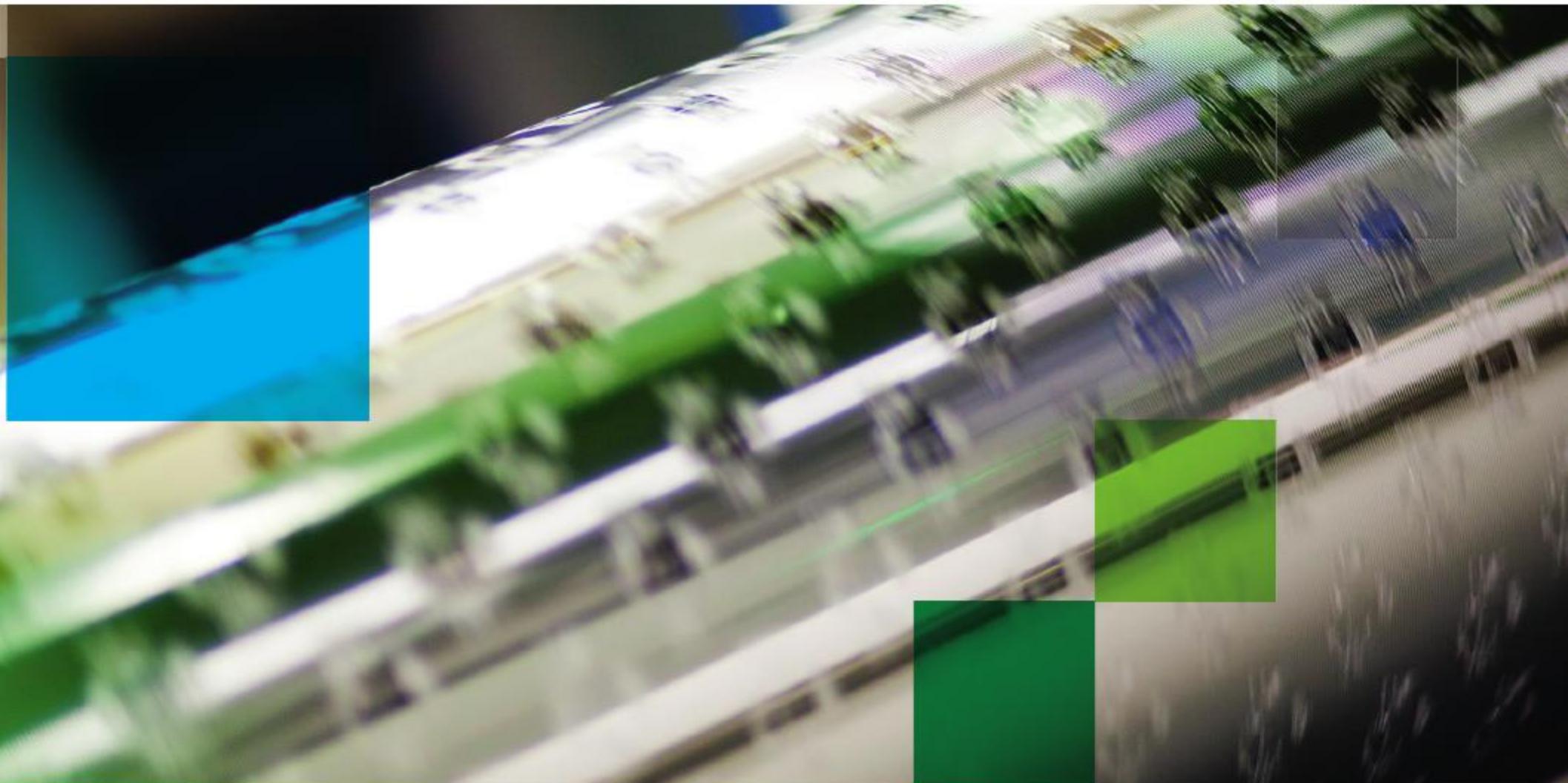
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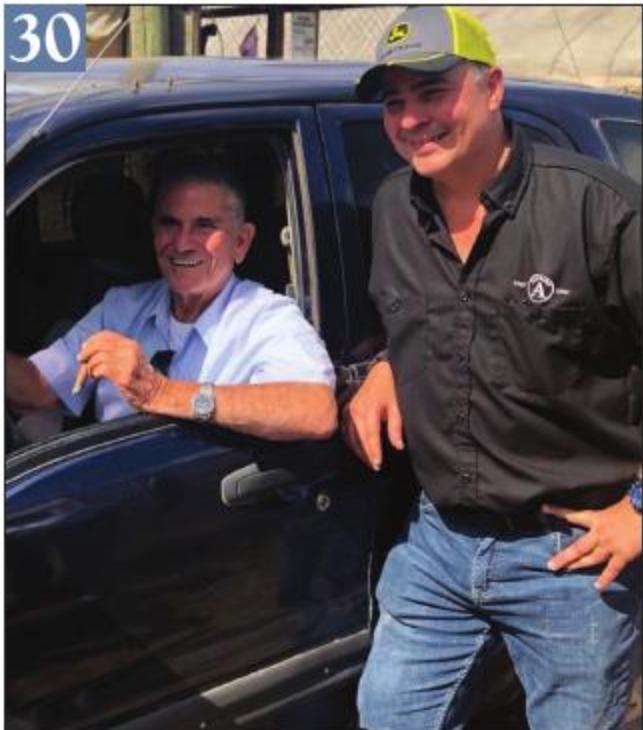
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REGULATION FOCUS

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A black and white photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a patterned dress and a large hoop earring. She is holding a cigarette in her right hand. The background is dark and out of focus.

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Proposed Rules on Substantial Equivalence Reports Continue to Frustrate Industry

At Urging, FDA Extends Comment Period an Additional 30 Days

When the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) published its Proposed Rule on the Content and Format of Substantial Equivalence Reports on April 2, 2019, the deadline for public comments on the proposed rule to be filed with the agency concerning was set for June 17, 2019.

The proposed rule affects how tobacco product manufacturers, from cigar makers to pipe tobacco manufacturers, will be able bring new products to market in the future. That process was established under the FDA's Final Deeming Rule, released in May 2016.

If finalized, the proposed rule would establish requirements for the content and format of reports intended to establish the substantial equivalence of a tobacco product. It would also establish the general procedures that FDA intends to follow when evaluating substantial equivalence reports.

For the industry, the stakes are high, and manufacturers and trade associations quickly petitioned FDA to extend the comment period.

"The Agency has received requests for an extension of the comment period for the proposed rule. The requests conveyed concern that the current 75-day comment period does not allow sufficient time to develop a meaningful or thoughtful response to the proposed rule.

On June 11, FDA announced that the deadline for submission of comments has been extended until July 17, 2019.

"FDA has considered the requests and is extending the comment period for the proposed rule for 30 days, until July 17, 2019. FDA believes a 30-day extension is appropriate and would help ensure that interested persons have time to fully consider the proposed provisions, which are detailed and interrelated, as well as to fully consider and develop responses to the agency's specific requests for comment."

Substantial Equivalence is one of three possible "pathways" a manufacturer can pursue in order to legally bring a new tobacco product to market under the 2016 Deeming Rule. But a long series of extension and delays—and now a court ruling invalidating FDA's most recent delay to implement the Substantial Equivalence process, has the industry once again scrambling.

A Substantial Equivalence report is necessary to prove that a new tobacco product has similar characteristics to a "predicate" or grandfathered product, i.e. one that was on the market prior to February 15, 2007. Or, to prove that the new product has different characteristic that don't raise any new health issues.

All products introduced to market after February 15, 2007 must ultimately gain some type of FDA approval or will no longer be legal to sell. That deadline was first set to come into affect August 8, 2018, but was delayed to August 8, 2021. Just last month, court ruled against FDA's extension, forcing the agency to set an earlier date. Expect all sides of that battle to continue to pursue legal challenges.

For premium cigar makers in particular, this landscape has been fraught with confusion and a lack of clear standards on the FDA's part. Due to the tremendous variation in natural tobaccos from crop to crop, blend to blend, vitola to vitola, the ability to establish standard testing methods that meet the FDA's requirements has been elusive, never mind the FDA's lack of guidance.

To file comments on the Proposed Rule, visit:
<https://www.regulations.gov/comment?D=FDA-2016-N-3818-0001>

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SMOKESHOP MAGAZINE

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Editorial submissions: Send new product announcements, corporate news, calendar events, letters to the editor, and story ideas to the Editor, editor@smokeshopmag.com.

SMOKESHOP (ISSN 0146-9266 print edition; ISSN 2331-8562 online digital edition), established in 1970, is published bimonthly (February, April, June, August, October, and December) by Lockwood Trade Journal Co., Inc., 3743 Crescent St, 2nd Floor, Long Island City, NY 11101 U.S.A. Postage paid at New York, NY and at additional mailing offices. Annual subscription rates: United States, \$24; Canada, \$34; all other countries \$49 by surface or \$69 by airmail, payable in advance. Copyright © 2019 by Lockwood Trade Journal Co., Inc. The contents of SMOKESHOP, and all articles, illustrations, photos, etc. are copyrighted and may not be reprinted except by permission. CPC agreement number 1477773.

POSTMASTER: Please send all address changes to SMOKESHOP Magazine, P.O. Box 385, Congers, N.Y. 10920-9985. Single Issue: US\$15

Smokeshop Magazine Is a member of: International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association (IPCPR); National Association of Tobacco Outlets (NATO); and Cigar Rights of America (CRA).



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Cigar Marketplace Announces First Wave of B2B Wholesale Distribution Partnerships with Manufacturers

MIAMI—Cigar Marketplace, a new dynamic online platform, seeking to bring the cigar manufacturer and retailer together and become “the new way B2B is conducted in the cigar industry,” has been met with an overwhelmingly positive response following its unveiling in April.

Cigar Marketplace is set to launch during the 2019 IPCPR in Las Vegas. The company has subsequently announced that numerous manufacturers have agreed to terms with the Cigar Marketplace platform, including but not limited to A.J. Fernandez Cigar Company, C.L.E. Cigar Company, Casa Cuevas Cigar, Caldwell Cigar, HF Barcelona, Los Caidos Cigars, PDR Cigars, Gurkha Cigars, Oliva Cigars, and Room 101.

Starky Arias, founder and c.e.o. of Cigar Marketplace, stated, “We felt an immediate response from hundreds of retailers and manufacturers alike, after the initial announcement of the Cigar Marketplace. We strongly believe that the Cigar Marketplace will fill a much-ignored gap in the industry. By facilitating the ordering process, the result will be more efficient transactions for both retailers and man-

ufacturers alike. We look forward to formally presenting the Cigar Marketplace concept at the 2019 IPCPR in Las Vegas.” Details on that formal presentation will be forthcoming (cigarmarketplace.co), and retailers will be invited to attend.

Founded in 2018, Cigar Marketplace saw that “while the world was getting smaller for most businesses, B2B cigar industry wholesale was still operating without the aid of the Internet,” Arias explains. “While the human touch is required when making and selling a premium brand, getting that brand to the people who love it these days requires the help of technology. Cigar Marketplace makes these problems a thing of the past. Retailers can now directly order from the suppliers they want without wait, getting their customers the brands they demand. Wholesalers no longer need to depend on going store-by-store to find the retailer that fits their brand. On top of that, both sides have 24/7 access, simplified product comparisons, free shipping, streamlined marketing, and administrative costs, and improved customer satisfaction.”



Kafie 1901 Cigars Rebrands as Tabacalera La Unión

CUTLER BAY, FLA.—Dr. Gaby Kafie, whose family has called Honduras home since 1901 and founded Kafie 1901 Cigars in 2013, has renamed his cigar business to Tabacalera La Unión. Kafie says the rebranding better reflects the company's current business

“Our factory over the past couple of years has grown significantly,” Kafie explains. “Apart from producing our own brands Kafie 1901 and San Jerónimo Cigars, we also produce eight other up-and-coming boutique cigar brands. Thus we recently decided to change the name of our factory to Tabacalera La Unión.”



“La Unión is a small coastal fishing village off the pacific coast of El Salvador where my father was born and the place where the Kafie family first settled in the region back in 1901. La Unión also means ‘the union’ in English.

“Our factory has grown because many people and brands have come together to make our factory a reality,” Kafie continued. “Both the Ferrera family of Honduras and the Kafie family of

Honduras have joined forces to build a completely vertical cigar factory. Together we are stronger. It is not about one person or one brand, it's about all of us helping each other achieve new heights.”

New Dates Set for 2020 IPCPR Trade Show at Sands

WASHINGTON, DC—The International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association (IPCPR) has announced new dates for the 2020 trade show at the Sands Convention Center in Las Vegas. The 88th Annual Convention and International Trade Show will take place Fri., July 10 through Tues., July 14, 2020. Educational sessions and the opening party will take place Fri., July 10, while move in starts July 7.

The change moves the trade show back to the second week of July, as it has historically been held for the past several years.

“While it was necessary for us to hold the event earlier this year in order to get the show back to the Sands, we heard loud and clear that the timing was not the best for our attendees,” said Scott Pearce, IPCPR executive director.

Scott Regina, chair of the IPCPR Trade Show Committee, added that continuity with the Sands and the dates will hopefully build more excitement around the annual show. “Our goal is to continuously work on building a better show experience and we believe that being able to move the dates will translate into a more successful event for everyone,” Regina said.



CATTLE BARON

Cigars

RATINGS

Cigar Authority: Stockyard **90**

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Kaplowitz: Trail Boss **A-**
Bull **A-**

Smoke Magazine: Trail Boss **93**



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In Bid to Cut Debt and Invest in NGP, Imperial Brands Seeks to Sell its Worldwide Premium Cigar Business

In April, Imperial Brands PLC confirmed its intention to sell its worldwide premium cigar business as part of its divestment program. The company said the program supports Imperial's ongoing "simplification agenda" and would release capital to pay down debt and, where appropriate, invest in its growth agenda, which has been focused on next generation products (NGP) including vape.

"Premium cigars have performed well over a number of years with good revenue and profit growth," the company explained in a statement, "however, it is a unique luxury business with a different consumer base and route to market relative to Imperial's other businesses."

The company's divestment program was announced in May 2018 and is expected to generate proceeds of up to \$2.55 billion by May 2020, if not earlier. Imperial says it has so far realized \$356 million from the sale of a portfolio of other tobacco products in the USA and a further 9.99 per cent of Logista. Significant progress has been made with a number of other divestment opportunities, with the priority of maximizing shareholder returns. Recognizing that tobacco valuations have come under some pressure in the last 12 months, assets will be sold only if they will realize appropriate value.



Imperial Brands' premium cigar holdings are extensive, and include Madrid-based Tabacalera (and its subsidiaries Tabacalera USA, which oversees Altadis U.S.A., Casa de Montecristo, and JR Cigar); two factories (the Dominican Republic's largest cigar factory, Tabacalera de García in La Romana and La Flor de Copan in Santa Rosa de Copan, Honduras); a cigar wrapper farming operation in Connecticut (Altadis Shade Company LLC); a 50 percent stake in Cuba's cigar sales and marketing company Habanos S.A.; dozens of brands; and numerous other subsidiaries and trademark owners.

Imperial Brands stated that while the various options for premium cigars are being evaluated, "there can be no certainty that any transaction will take place or as to the terms of any such transaction."

Republic Tobacco Targets TOP, JOB Counterfeitors

GLENVIEW, ILL—In a series of coordinated police raids, government enforcement actions, civil suits, and product seizures in mid-May Republic Tobacco, LP made clear to its customers of legitimate TOP and JOB brand cigarette papers—and to all those who seek to illicitly profit by trafficking in counterfeit goods—that it will use all power and resources available to it under the law to prosecute and bring to justice counterfeiters of its products.

These actions, which took place around the country, resulted in the seizure of significant quantities of counterfeit TOP and JOB cigarette papers, and other allegedly counterfeit goods. In conjunction with these police raids, Republic also filed civil actions seeking monetary and punitive damages and injunctive relief from those who traffic in counterfeit goods and who have profited

from their sale and distribution.

Republic continues to work closely with both federal and state law enforcement authorities and police departments to criminally prosecute traffickers of counterfeit cigarette papers. On May 14, 2019 DeKalb County, Georgia Sheriff's Police executed search warrants on three wholesalers and retailers who were allegedly trafficking in counterfeit goods, resulting in substantial criminal and civil seizures.

Republic has filed lawsuits against wholesalers and retailers trafficking in counterfeit goods in states throughout the country, with additional actions forthcoming. We have also filed actions against foreign nationals selling counterfeit goods at trade shows, and we monitor trade shows for the proliferation and marketing of counterfeit products.

White Hat Cigars Now La Familia Robaina

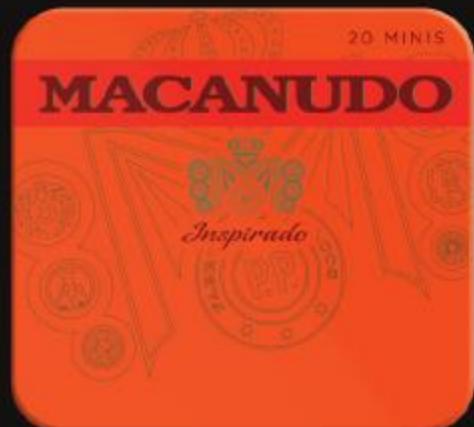
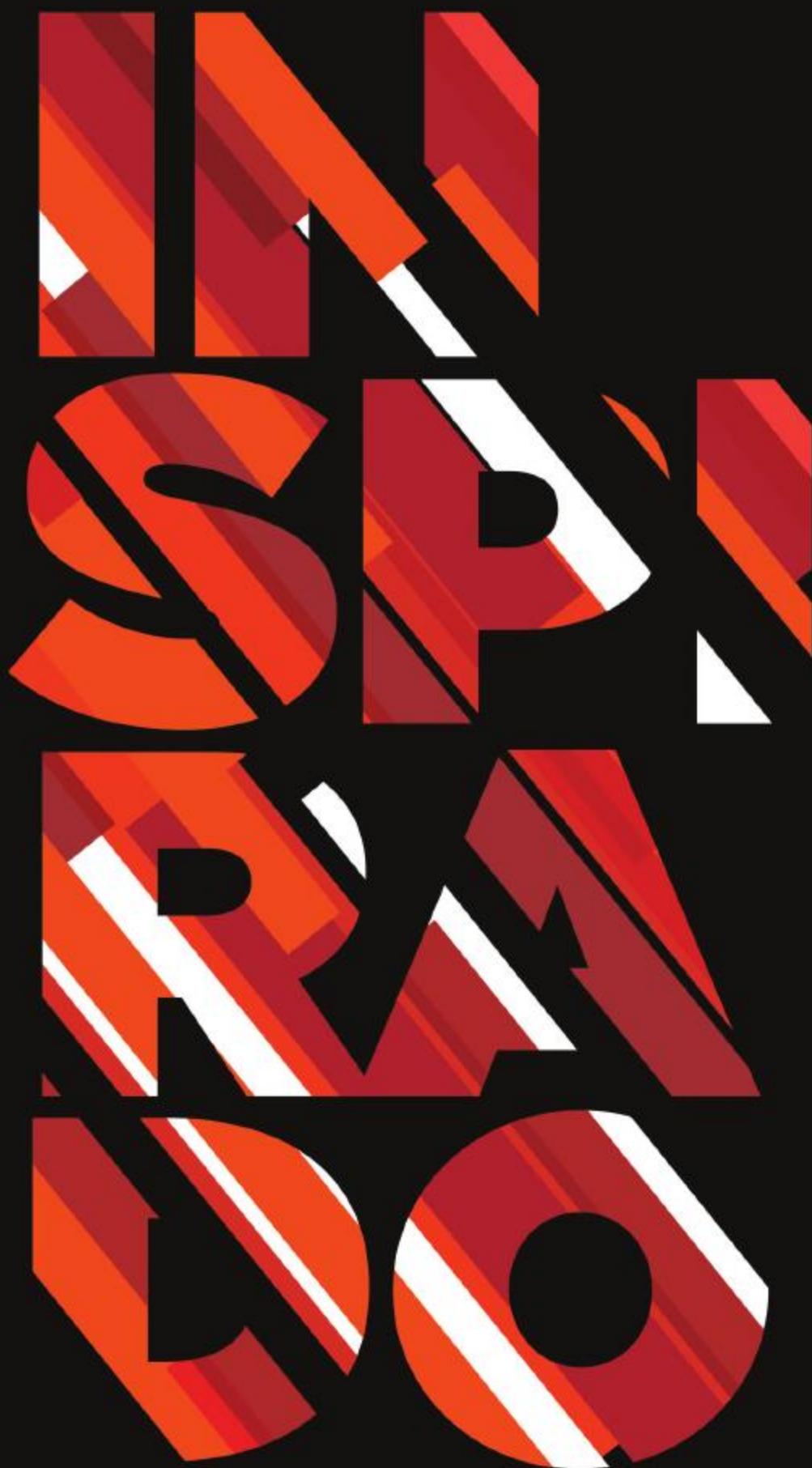
In an effort to reduce confusion and illuminate the famed Robaina name, White Hat Cigars has changed its name to La Familia Robaina.

"After fielding questions for the past 3-1/2 years about the relationship between the Robaina's and White Hat, Hirochi and I felt it made sense to rename the company," said Spence Drake. "The Robaina name is steeped in tobacco and tradition. When people are considering our cigars, we want them to know that there are 175 years of experience and tradition that have gone into every one."

The Robaina family has been growing tobacco on the same farm near Pinar Del Rio, Cuba since 1845. In 2010 the Robaina's expanded their operation by partnering with growers in Nicaragua and Ecuador.

"Our family has always cherished the fact that we have been indirectly involved in so many celebrations of other families," said Hirochi Robaina. "Since the 1800s, our tobacco has been enjoyed at weddings, the birth of children, or the first time a father and son enjoy a cigar together. This is not something we take for granted, it's something that we take great pride in and hope to continue for years to come."





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Industry NEWS

► BriarWorks to Host 1st Annual Muletown Pipe Show in August

COLUMBIA, TENN.—BriarWorks U.S.A. has announced it will host its 1st Annual Muletown Pipe Show inside its Columbia, Tenn. factory and smoking lounge. "This will be a pipe show unlike any other, and we are excited to welcome in people from all over," the company stated in announcing the event, which will be held Friday, August 30 through Sunday, September 1, 2019.

"When we moved our pipe factory to Columbia from Nashville last year, part of our vision was to create an exciting new pipe show that took place inside our factory," the company explained. "We didn't want it to just be a BriarWorks show, though. We wanted to host a show that featured the pipe smoking community as a whole. The show will feature pipe makers, collectors, vendors, and enthusiasts from all over the world."

Vendor tables are available for \$100; half tables for \$50. Attendee admission is \$10 if purchased in advance, or \$15 at the door and includes a goodie bag and t-shirt. The preliminary schedule includes a factory tour and pipe finishing demo on Friday, show from 11am–5pm on Saturday and Sunday, and the company's lounge and tap room will be open until 2am daily. Smoking is permitted. "Columbia has been good to us, and we are pleased to bring a great annual event to promote the pipe smoking hobby to the city."

BriarWorks has created a dedicated website for the event at muletownpipeshow.com for ongoing updates, or contact the company at info@briarworksusa.com or Tel: (931) 223-8985.



► Micallef Cigars Opens New Distribution Center, Headquarters

WEATHERFORD, TEXAS—Micallef Cigars, LLC has opened a new 17,000 sq. foot distribution facility in Weatherford, Texas, which also serves as headquarters for the Micallef management team, a move that "is going to take Micallef Cigars to the next stage of our growth as a company," said Al Micallef, founder and president, in announcement. Last year, the company purchased a 40,000 sq. foot factory in Estelí, Nicaragua, operated by the Gómez Sanchez family. Micallef, a Fort Worth, Texas entrepreneur, founded the fast-growing cigar company in 2016, in conjunction with the third generation Sanchez family of cigarmakers.

► Personnel Moves

► **Plasencia 1865, Inc.** has announced the appointment of two new sales representatives.

Wayne Clarke joins the firm as northeast region representative, excluding Pennsylvania. Previously Clark served as general manager and sales director for Hiram and Solomon Cigars; market sales manager at General Cigar Company; and tri-state sales representative for Blanco Cigar Company covering New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.

Cameron Miller has joined the company as southwestern sales representative. Prior to his appointment, Miller was general manager at The Smoke Ring in Webster, Texas.

► **Fratello Cigars** has named **Preston Springer** territory sales executive serving Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Arizona. Springer brings seven years experience in sales and new business development in the logistics and medical equipment and services industries.

► **Brad Winstead** has been appointed the new head of **Casa de Montecristo**, the brick and mortar retail store and cigar lounge unit of Tabacalera USA. Winstead had previously served as head of marketing, Altadis U.S.A., and earlier head of sales before assuming his new role with Casa de Montecristo. He began his career at Altadis U.S.A. in July 2007 as a territory sales manager. Luis Torres, former head of Casa de Montecristo, has left the company to pursue other opportunities.

► **Kretek International, Inc.** has promoted **Patrick Hurd** to chief sales officer, responsible for leading the company's long-term direction and health of the overall business. Previously, Hurd has served as Kretek Canada's general manager; general manager at Kretek subsidiary Ventura Cigar company; and most recently as vice president of sales for Kretek U.S.

John Tirpak has been named to the position of vice president of sales, bringing 23 years of experience in the premium cigar industry. Most recently, Tirpak served as the company's director of sales, and before that as director of sales at Ventura Cigar Company.

Sean Teninty has been promoted to vice president of sales strategy,



Clarke



Miller

having previously served as the company's senior director of sales strategy. He has been with the company for over five years, having helped transform its business analytics and planning, and for creating channel-specific strategies. Teninty will also continue to lead the company's trade marketing and business analytics, and oversee the retail sales operations team.



Teninty

► **Cigar Oasis** announced the appointment of **Dan Barranco** as sales manager, replacing **Chaim Kohn** who will now be serving as director of sales and new business development. Barranco brings with him 13 years of experience in the retail consumer electronics industry in both a service and sales capacity, as well as a decade of involvement with the cigar industry as a brand ambassador for numerous boutique brands and as a passionate consumer. Kohn has been with the company since 2013.



Barranco



Hurd



Tirpak

Cigar Manufacturers

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► Calendar

JUNE 29-JULY 2, 2019

IPCPR 87th Annual Convention and International Trade Show

Sands Expo and Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas, Nev. Contact: International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers Association, Washington, D.C., Tel: (202) 621-8064 Email: info@ipcpr.org, Web: ipcpr.org.

AUGUST 22-23, 2019

23rd Annual Smoker Friendly Conference & Tobacco Festival

Omni Interlocken Resort, Broomfield, Colo. Contact: Mary Szarmach, Toll-free: (888) 751-2785 ext. 217, Email: info@smokerfriendly.com, Web: smokerfriendly.com.

AUGUST 23-24, 2019

North American Society of Pipe Collectors (NASPC) 2019 Swap/Sell Pipe Show

Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dublin, Ohio. Dealer Tables, \$120. Attendance free to the public. Information and table reservations: Jeff Knoll, (614) 306-6239, email: naspc@graphic-touch.biz, Web: naspc.org

SEPTEMBER 20-22, 2019

20th Greater Kansas City Pipe & Tobacco Show

Argosy Casino Hotel Spa & Casino, Riverside, Mo. Exhibit hall, smoking tent, CIPC pipe smoking contest, pipe care and refurbishing clinic, silent auction, carving contest. Contact: Greater Kansas City Pipe Club, Email: admin@gkcpipeclub.com, Web: gkcpipeclub.com.

SEPTEMBER 20-22, 2019

InterTabac/InterSupply 2019

Messe Westfalenhallen Exhibition Centre, Dortmund, Germany. Web: intertabac.de.

OCTOBER 5, 2019

2019 Pipe Smoker's Gathering at Sutliff Tobacco

Sutliff Tobacco Company, Richmond, Va., co-presented with Conclave of Richmond Pipe Smokers (CORPS). Admission \$5, CORPS members free. Smoking permitted. Factory tours, social smoking tent, live post show entertainment, blending seminars, food trucks serving lunch and dinner. Info: conclaveofrichmondpipesmokers.org, Web: Info: conclaveofrichmondpipesmokers.org.

NOVEMBER 9-10, 2019

11th Annual West Coast Pipe Show

Palace Station Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, Nev. Hosted by Steve O'Neill and Marty Pulvers. Smoking friendly exhibit hall with adjacent lounge with full bar. For table reservations and information, contact: Steve O'Neill, Email: steve@westcoastpipeshow.com, Web: westcoastpipeshow.com.

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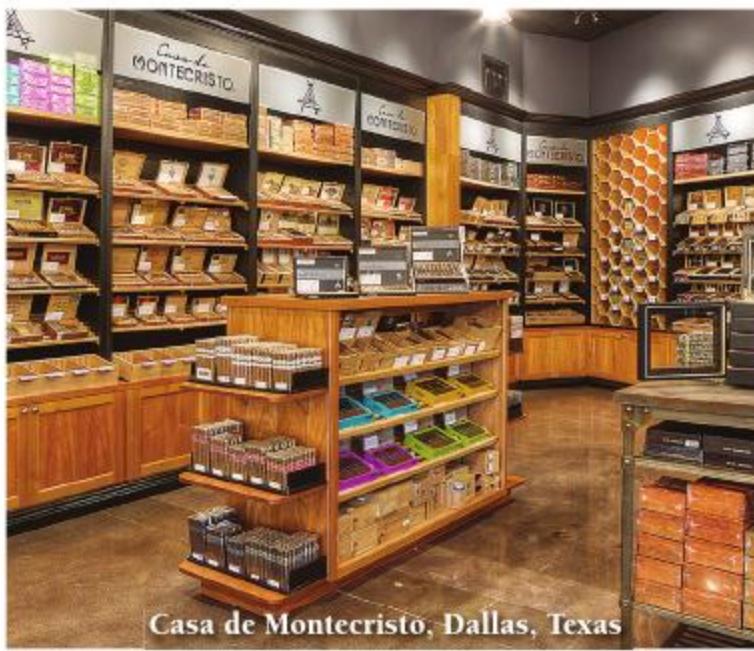
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Capital Cigar Lounge Modern Cigar Sizzle in Middle America

Youthful enthusiasm and worldly experience met in a partnership for a world-class lounge and an eye to the future. > BY JEFF BOLTON

The new Capital Cigar Lounge in Lincoln, Nebraska evokes images of modern, crisp architecture that might be found in Berlin or Dubai. Sharp, clean lines are featured in both the exterior and interior appointments. The bar, humidor, conference room, and public and private lounges are a result of a collaboration grounded in both youth and experience, dreams and sagacity. Austin Hillis and Tony Goins have created a business partnership and retail cigar model that they believe is the next evolution in the industry. Smokeshop's Jeff Bolton sat down with the partners in Lincoln to see and hear their vision of retail cigar shops as we approach the year 2020.

SMOKESHOP: The remarkably modern-looking facility is new construction and the visual design and aesthetics are a new approach to the

traditional retail cigar business. What was the thinking behind this approach?

AUSTIN: We researched, and wanted to understand, what it would be like if we were to spend every day, all day, in a cigar lounge. We believed that understanding that dynamic would be key to understanding our customer's desires. Seven months in, we are continuing to evolve our model by adjusting it to what our customers enjoy.

TONY: We looked at our market, and like other markets where you see cigar lounges, they are typically geared toward men. [But] women are becoming connoisseurs of cigars as well. We also wanted the lounge to appeal to a broad range of men and women ages 21–90. Capital Cigar Lounge doesn't feel like old lounges of the past. It's open and inviting and accommodating to both women and men.



>Austin Hillis (left) and business partner Tony Goins (right), co-owners of Capital Cigar Lounge.



>Patrons enter directly into the public lounge where the bar is located; the entrance to the walk-in humidor is visible on the left.

SMOKESHOP: *Describe the importance of the expansive bar design and cocktail strategy.*

TONY: What was important to us is that friends have the opportunity to enjoy friends. The art of relationships has been lost. Society has moved away from humanity. Capital Cigar Lounge is designed to create conversation. We were intentional in creating an environment where conversation can flourish because in that environment you find out that you have more in common than apart. Capital Cigar Lounge is a haven for friends and the lounge and bar design are a direct reflection of the effort to create that dynamic.

AUSTIN: We know that people are naturally drawn to a label on a bottle and the way it looks—they buy with their eyes. At our bar, a customer can clearly see every bottle we have on display. There are 275 bottles side-by-side without staggering them. We take the same approach to organizing, displaying, and showcasing cigars. Also, our teammates

are very well trained to educate our customers and give them details of what they will experience with specific cigars and flavors. Pairing cocktails and cigars changes the flavor experience completely and customers appreciate being guided in that experience.

SMOKESHOP: *You prominently feature branded partnerships—Alec Bradley and Cohiba—in both the public and private lounges. Did the design of the facility help land those sponsorships?*

TONY: The facility design absolutely had an impact on attracting Alec Bradley and Cohiba to branded partnerships for our public and private cigar lounges. The branded partnership goals began with our mission statement: “We create mini vacations for our customers and friends.”

By living the core value of “treat customers like friends,” we wanted them to have an unparalleled experience in our location, from the exterior—beginning with sufficient parking availability—to the detail of seeing the huge humidor

first when they walk into the lounge. The patio area and aesthetics are also a very important detail in the overall image we wanted to project to our customers and friends. We’re fully developing the patio area as we speak.

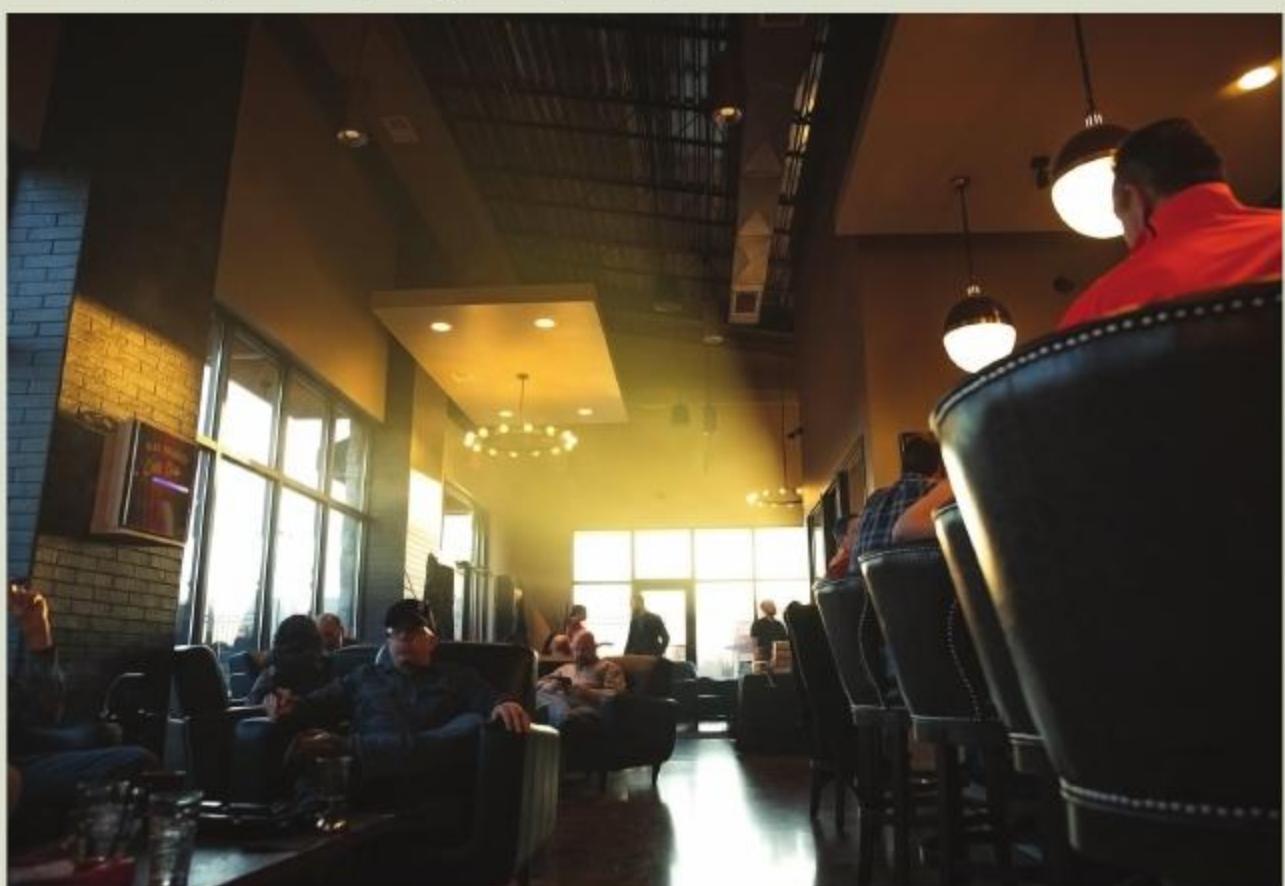
AUSTIN: The brand partners want to be represented responsibly and thoughtfully. Allen Rubin said, “I like the knowledge and expertise of these guys,” and the facility showed them we were serious, and attracted them to our efforts.

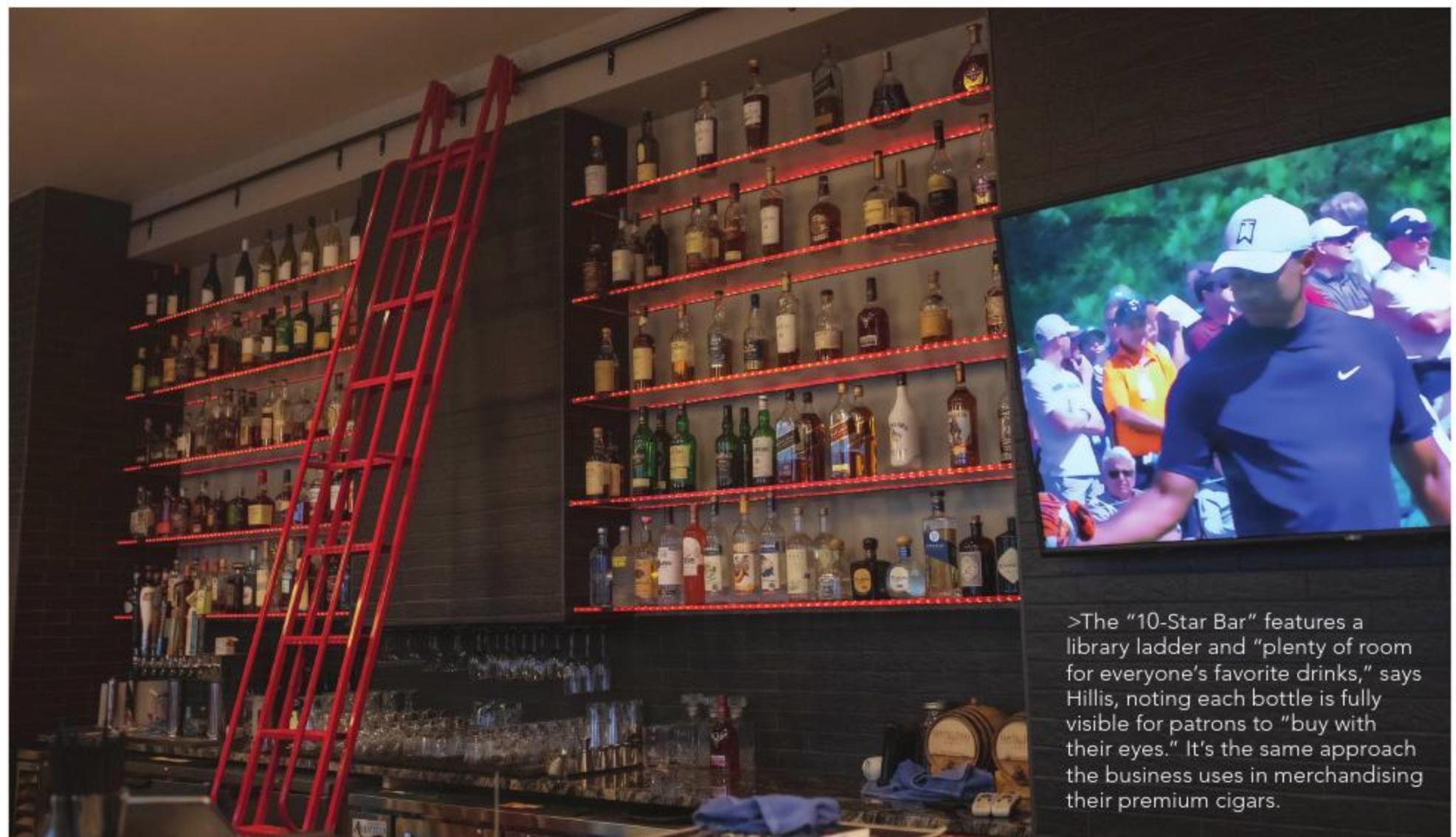
TONY: We flew to the corporate headquarters of Alec Bradley with the intent to finalize the branded partnership with them and we had a successful six-hour meeting with the Rubin family: Allen [father], Alec and Bradley [sons], to accomplish that goal. I also had a long-term relationship and history with Sean Williams on the Cohiba side that made the difference in securing their participation.

SMOKESHOP: *What was the reaction of your brand partners at first look of the completed lounge?*



>Above left: CCL owners and staff; the store's mantra is to "treat customers like friends." Above right: Inside the walk-in humidor. Below left: Free access to the conference room is a perk of membership in the private lounge, but it is also available for use by all patrons at an hourly rate of \$45. Private lounge members also have access to private cigar lockers, outdoor patio, private key entry, among other perks.





>The "10-Star Bar" features a library ladder and "plenty of room for everyone's favorite drinks," says Hillis, noting each bottle is fully visible for patrons to "buy with their eyes." It's the same approach the business uses in merchandising their premium cigars.

AUSTIN: We had a private dinner for our sponsors and customers after about a week of being open. Sean said "Wow! This looks great!" when he walked into the public lounge. After going into the private lounge, he said he would put Capital Cigar Lounge up against any lounge in any city in the U.S. We were the first U.S. Alec Bradley branded partner lounge; Allen Rubin has eleven in Europe. They were very satisfied, and relieved that we did all that we said we would do, especially with the ventilation system.

TONY: To echo Austin, our two brand partners were extremely pleased with the extensive efforts we put into the ventilation system. We spent a lot of time and resources with the engineers at Trane HVAC and I traveled to Greensboro, N.C. to meet with Phil Segal of Havana Phil's to study his facility. He was an incredible gentleman in a difficult time for him. With his input, multiple engineers collaborated for many hours to make sure our ventilation system was right; we wanted clean air pumped in and filtered in huge volumes. Also, the air pumped out could not go into the neighboring business. Strip mall owners and tenants often complain about this when a cigar lounge is contained in the multi-retail structure.

The result of these efforts at Capital Cigar Lounge is that when customers walk in to the facility there is no standing smoke in the air. They don't have to go home and exterminate themselves because they have been sitting in a smoke-filled room. The engineers really created a ground-breaking system and it works very, very well.

AUSTIN: Tony has 30 years of relationships built across America and he has traveled to many, many cigar lounges. That experience really informed our ventilation efforts. And with regard to Phil, both Tony and I want to give our thanks, appreciation, and condolences to Phil's family. He cheerfully spent significant time with Tony when he was battling his illness, and he passed away only three weeks after they met. We are deeply grateful for his friendship and professionalism and we think he would be pleased and what we accomplished with his counsel.

TONY: We are so very humbled and appreciative that Phil wanted to take the time to talk to us so we could get our lounge right... a true professional and a class act. Jeff Doll from Safari lounge also spent numerous hours with us as well, in addition to our good friend Dave Frakes in Frisco,



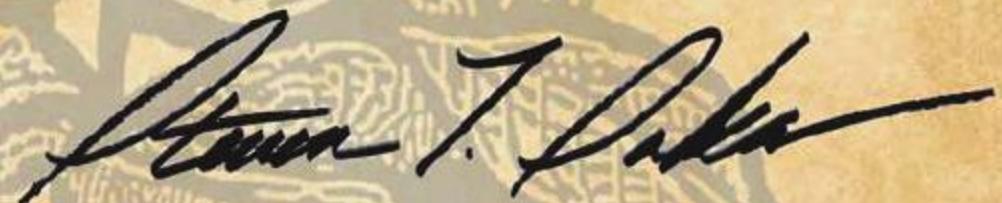
Texas. Keith and Tiffany Rumbo in San Antonio at Club Humidor were also huge influences. All of these fine people demonstrated that the cigar industry and culture is about relationships. That's what happens over a cigar—a relationship.

SMOKESHOP: *Describe your partnership and what makes it work despite the significant difference in your ages?*

TONY: It goes back to the origin of Capital Cigar Lounge. I was a customer. I walked in one day and Austin was standing behind the counter. I asked if he was filling in and he said, "No, I'm the new owner!" He was in his early 20s and his drive and efforts touched a nerve in a positive way for me. I knew Austin's father, Jeff, and I had a lot of respect for him. Austin had many challenges when he became a business owner at a young age, but tough times are where you build character.



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Soon after purchasing Capital Cigar, Austin made the bold change of moving the store to a new location and immediately saw a 20 percent growth in sales. He recognized that his customers were coming from the south side of Lincoln. Most people don't take time to recognize that. For many years, I had dreamed of owning a cigar shop and lounge, but I couldn't find the right person to be my business partner until I met Austin. He inspired me to live my personal dream—in my 50s! We have mutual respect for one another, and it is the best decision I have ever made.

AUSTIN: I previously worked in a law firm that formed a lot of companies and partnerships. I saw many companies both formed and dissolved, so I had an idea of what a great partnership might look like—and not look like. Tony and I do have a level of mutual respect for

the culture of understanding people, I was able to come alongside him and help move us both forward. We make a good combination.

SMOKESHOP: *Describe the culture of Capital Cigar Lounge.*

TONY: I have been a Peter Drucker student for 20 years. I am a big believer in the practice of taking great care of the people that work for you—and watching them take care of your customers as a result. Our employees are called teammates. We never use the word employee. The probability of success in business is much less if you don't create a great culture. Our teammates have a stake in the business and an opinion that counts. They also have autonomy. That is a foundation for a great business—moving the brand forward and having teammates take care of our customers well.

AUSTIN: We have a three-year and 10-year vision. Year one has been recruiting and training staff and growing our customer base. We had a loyal, robust customer base when we opened, and we continue to grow that base. We base our success on five pillars: ventilation, customer service, great cigars, great cocktails, and comfortable seating.

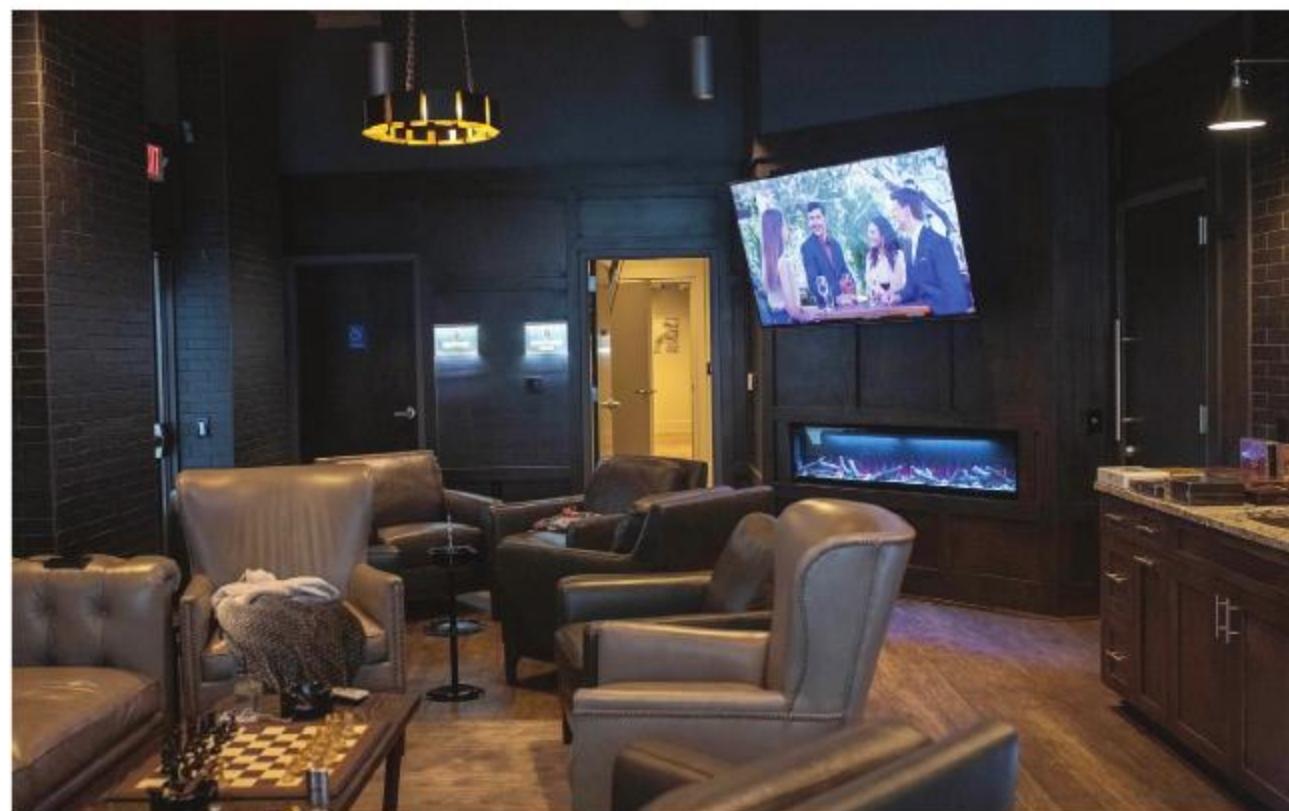
Our 10-year vision is to find opportunities in the right markets to replicate our model and create mini-vacations across the United States.

TONY: There is a high level of long-term goal alignment in our partnership, but in the short term, we have a big opportunity to grow in our current market. I still run into people in Lincoln that don't know who we are, so there is always opportunity. We call our current growth effort "Operation Drive Traffic." This life is fun every day, but as a for-profit business we must use metrics for success and set precise goals and objectives. We also need to grow and cultivate our loyal customer base; we recently sent handwritten thank you notes to all of our private lounge members. They are a bedrock for success in our business.

SMOKESHOP: *Your thoughts on the future of Capital Cigar Lounge?*

TONY: We appreciate the opportunity to have a business in Lincoln, Nebraska and we appreciate our teammates who are willing to go outside their comfort zone. They give all that they have. I also think that we really have the opportunity to impact our community and society. Diversity and inclusion are the remedy—while smoking a cigar we find that color, religion, etc. don't matter. Enjoying a cigar together evens the playing field. Harmony happens over a cigar.

AUSTIN: We work in a regulated industry. It took 13 months to get through the red tape in order to open the new Capital Cigar Lounge. Tony and I set the conditions for success, but it truly does take great teammates and customers to make our business work. We're very grateful to have people that take time out of their day and spend it at Capital Cigar. There are a lot of choices out there, and when people choose to spend their time with us it becomes more than just business.



>There are separate membership tiers for individuals and corporations for private lounge access. CCL considers its private members the "bedrock for successes" and continues to add benefits.

one another. It's not always fun: we've had some tough conversations along the way. We both have non-negotiables that we respect and we look at what's best for our families. We both want to grow the Capital Cigar brand and we keep the business at the forefront and take the emotion out of it.

TONY: Austin is bright, energetic, and wanted to be an entrepreneur; through serving my country as a U.S. Marine and having a lot of high-level merger and acquisition and high-end banking business experience, with

AUSTIN: In a cigar lounge, culture is extremely important because this is a 1000% relationship business. Everything we do is face-to-face. Our customers and friends know our teammates by their first name. We work in a high-touch environment where friendships are built. If we did not build that culture, then our customers would see right through it and it would be fake. We have zero percent employee turnover thus far.

SMOKESHOP: *What are your hopes and dreams for Capital Cigar Lounge?*

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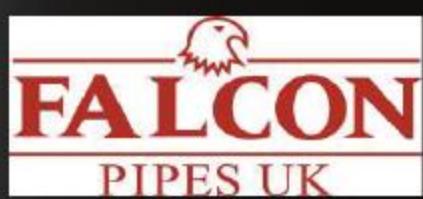
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>Workers at "El Credito," the La Gloria Cubana rolling gallery at General Cigar Dominicana, pause with wheels of finished cigars. Processes and traditions unique to La Gloria Cubana's former El Credito factory remain firmly in place today, separate from other General Cigar procedures.

Glory for La Gloria

La Gloria Cubana, a part of General Cigar since 1999, is the focus of branding updates and marketing initiatives this year focusing on its El Credito factory heritage. > **BY FRANK SELTZER**

Over the past several years, General Cigar has been pouring over its vast portfolio of brands and finding ways to update the look and feel of them. So far, the company has modernized its flagship Macanudo; last year Punch and Partagas had their turn; and this year it will be La Gloria Cubana.

The company is revamping the La Gloria line beginning with La Gloria Spanish Press, which was released in May. Says General Cigar president Regis Broersma, "We wanted retailers to re-engage with La Gloria Cubana, knowing it was beneficial to their sales and their margin. So we updated the look and feel of the brand to drive more cohesion and improved branding on the shelf."

La Gloria Cubana has been an important brand for General Cigar since it was acquired from Ernesto Perez Carrillo, Jr. La Gloria Cubana was founded by Ernesto's father in 1972. Ernesto took over the El Credito factory in 1977 to help his ailing father. The factory on Calle Ocho in Miami struggled throughout the 1980s. It made several brands, El Credito, El Rico Habano, and La Gloria. When the cigar boom began in 1992, the new publication *Cigar Aficionado* rated the La Gloria Wavell a 90 out of 100 points and that turned El Credito upside down. Smokers nationwide wanted the cigar, so Ernesto ran the factory six days a week with two shifts per day, but still could not keep up.

By 1996, El Credito had two factories—the original in Miami and another one in the Dominican Republic—just to keep up with the demand. Just three years later, Ernesto sold his company to Swedish Match, giving that company its first premium cigar line. (It previously had purchased General Cigar's mass-market lines.)

In 2003, Ernesto brought in Yuri Guillen to run the day-to-day operations at the Dominican El Credito factory, freeing him up to do more blending. By 2005, Swedish Match bought General Cigar's premium business and eventually merged it into a joint venture with Scandinavian Tobacco. But throughout the purchases and an eventual closing of the El Credito building in Santiago, the factory workers remained separate from the rest of General Cigar's manufacturing. Says Yuri, who remains production manager for the factory, "At El Credito, we had certain processes and procedures that we wanted to maintain. We consider El Credito like a boutique factory under the umbrella of General Cigar. With the

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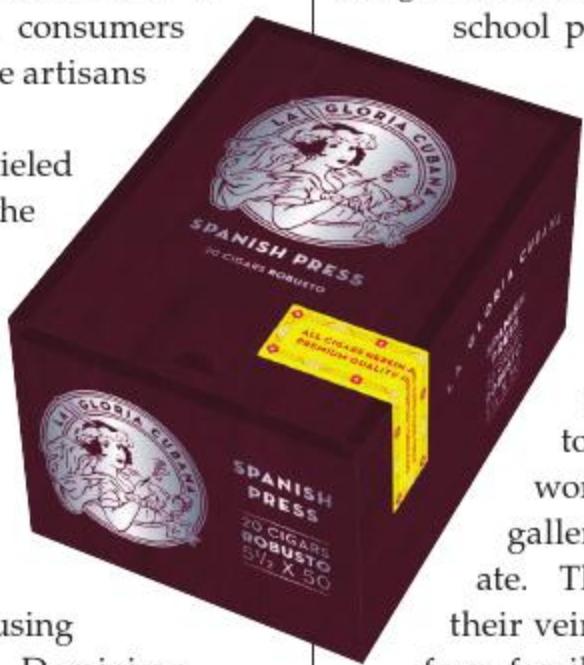
> Above: La Gloria Cubana rollers work in a separate rolling gallery within General Cigar Dominican called El Credito. Right: Regis Broersma, president, General Cigar Co., and Yuri Guillen, El Credito production manager. Below: La Gloria Cubana Spanish Press was released in May in three shapes utilizing a traditional box press method not common in modern factories.

same techniques, the same tobaccos, and the same great team of cigar makers, it is the same La Gloria Cubana as it was in the 90s."

As part of the new marketing effort, General Cigar will focus on telling the story of the El Credito Factory and its artisans in a campaign called "Where Our Passion Meets Yours." Yuri explains, "This captures the intersection of passion of our loyal consumers with the passion of the artisans in the factory."

The company unveiled its newest cigars at the recent 2019 Procigar festival held in the Dominican Republic in February. The La Gloria Cubana Spanish Press started shipping in May. They feature a four-country blend using Nicaraguan Jalapa, Dominican Piloto Cubano and Olor, and Brazilian Mata Fina in the filler, along with a Mexican San Andres binder and a Nicaraguan Jalapa wrapper. The cigars range from \$6.29 to \$7.99 in three sizes—Robusto (5 1/2 x 50), Toro (6 1/2 x 52), and Gigante (6 x 60)—presented in 20 count boxes.

The cigars are box pressed, but not in the usual fashion. Instead, they are put in



wooden trays to get the initial box press, then there is an additional step, says Yuri: "We are also going to put the cigar in a specially-sized box so the final press will actually be in the box. The name comes from an old process that happened in Cuba, way before the embargo. It was in the 1940s. We are bringing it to life because it is a unique technique. We are using modern technology along with old school processes." Guillen adds

that this method also happens to eliminate air pockets, producing an optimal draw and output of smoke.

Yuri is also quite proud of the workers in the El Credito factory. "The people who work in the El Credito galleria are very passionate. They have tobacco in their veins. Many of them came from families in Santiago who for generations grew tobacco in small farms. Growing up, they helped their families grow the tobacco and now some of these people are working for us for the past 25–30 years. It is all about the people and the techniques."

Another added benefit for General Cigar's 5-Star accounts is that LGC will be included in a merchandising pro-

gram that provides a margin enhancement for these accounts. Says Broersma, Macanudo was the first to move to keystone, but La Gloria was also on his mind at the time.

"I didn't want to do everything at the same time because if it didn't work it would be a financial hit," Broersma explains. "But we saw success from day one with Macanudo when we moved it to keystone. The number of the products on the shelf went up. The position was elevated to a higher level, and the reorders also came. We expect the same success with La Gloria Cubana as well."

For Guillen, La Gloria Cubana remains a challenge, but one he welcomes. "The people who smoke La Gloria are very loyal to the brand and they know that if I were to change something in the cigar, they would notice," he says. "The La Gloria smokers are very demanding and they put pressure on us to always do our best. We give our best every day by giving them just what they want: the same cigar, the same tobacco, made by the same passionate people."

Regis adds with the renewed push on La Gloria Cubana and the added merchandising program at keystone, it helps General's brick and mortar business. "You have to be relevant to the core retailer and that is what we are doing." ■

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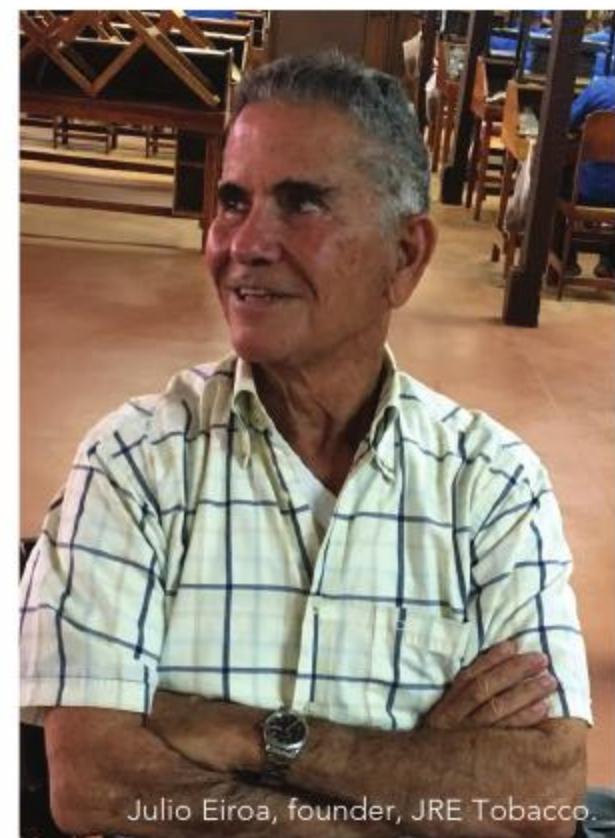
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Julio Eiroa, founder, JRE Tobacco.

The First Honduran

Tobacco grower and cigar maker Julio Eiroa has packed more than his fair share of adventure, twists, and turns in his long cigar career, but he's happier than ever with his JRE Tobacco vision. > **BY FRANK SELTZER**

Julio Rafael Eiroa is a Cuban, but at 81, he is probably best known for his work in Honduras. With his younger son Christian, he made Camacho, La Fontana, Baccarat the Game, and other cigar brands under the Camacho company flag using the tobaccos Julio grew on his farm just outside Danlí. In 2008, Julio sold the company to Oettinger Davidoff, the parent company of Davidoff of Geneva, which continues to make those brands. But with the sale, Julio kept his farm and did not stop growing his tobacco. Instead, he formed a new company with his older son Justo called JRE Tobacco Co., named after Julio's initials, and has reintroduced old blends using those tobaccos to the modern market with a determination to make the best cigars possible.

Julio's journey began in Cuba, where he was born in the Pinar del Rio region. His family had a farm near farms of other famous Cuban tobacco growers—Plasencia, Toraño, Cura, Oliva, and Daniel Rodriguez. Rodriguez was the one who had his farm, El Corojo, where he developed the Corojo seed for which Cuba was

known. Julio admits he was kind of a rebel as a youth. He attended one year of high school at the Jesuit School in Havana, until the school suggested he look elsewhere, and his family sent him to the Admiral Farragut military school in St. Petersburg, Florida. During that time, he built a closer relationship with the Oliva Tobacco family and others through classmates at the school.

By 1957, he was back in Cuba and as a student at the University of Havana. He fell in with other revolutionaries. Through a friend of the family, Julio was told he was on a government list of people to be arrested under the Batista regime for being a trouble-maker. He took refuge in the Nicaraguan embassy in Havana, eventually got out of the country, and headed to Tampa where he started to work in the Perfecto Garcia factory—a company that had been buying his father's Cuban tobacco since 1941. He stayed for a year until Fidel Castro succeeded in his revolution in January 1959, and Julio went back to his homeland.

But, once home, he began to see what Castro was really about. Having thought the revolutionary would make the country better under a democracy, he quickly realized Castro had no intention of being democratic. Says Julio, "In Cuba we didn't have a monarchy, but Castro was acting like he was a king. I saw he was a communist and that he would kill our democracy." He then realized he had been one of the many "*tontos utiles*" or useful fools used by the revolution.

In 1960, his family made what was a usual trip to Tampa where normally they would sell tobacco, but this time they took nothing with them because they had no intention of going back. The Oliva family set them up in an apartment in Tampa and Julio and his brothers immediately got jobs in the cigar industry. In 1961, Julio and his fellow ex-pats joined in what would be known as the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba. Fortunately, Julio and his close friends never reached Cuba and were not arrested. Immediately after, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and spent two years in Korea.

In 1963, the Cuban embargo was in full swing and cigar makers were looking for replacement tobacco. A test crop grown in Honduras the previous year needed sorting so Julio and Gerencio Cura—a Cuban tobacco farmer—were sent by the Olivas to this primitive area known as Jamastran, which today is the JRE Tobacco Farm. Julio says, "When we first got



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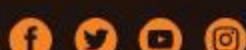
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> Julio Eiroa's tobacco farm in Jamastran, Honduras, supplies much of the tobacco needs for his cigar factories, particularly his flagship tobacco crop, authentic Cuban-seed corojo, as well as criollo.



here it was nothing but a jungle. The soil looked good, but there were panthers, monkeys and all kinds of wildlife. And trees everywhere. We needed to clear the land, so we did it by hand chopping down big cedar trees. We burnt many of them to help clear the land. It was probably a million dollars' worth of cedar but at the time there was no market for it."

The first crops were a disaster, not that the land was bad, but Julio tried drying the leaves as they had in Cuba, outside under plastic. The difference between Cuba and Honduras was that in Cuba during the drying process there was little wind...not so in Honduras. The second try was to set up a Cuban barn, which still sits on the JRE Tobacco Farm today. This time the crop was good and pronounced by Oliva to be as good or better than Cuba.

Julio found many willing markets for his tobacco with some of the largest cigar makers at the time. By the 1970s, Eiroa was the largest grower of Candela wrapper. He truly enjoyed his life on the farm. Son Justo remembers growing up on the farm, saying the house the family lived in didn't have much, being so rural. There was a generator that they would run for only a few hours a night, but the stove and refrigerator ran on gas. Justo loved the farm as much as his dad and both enjoyed horseback riding around the property. In 1977, Julio was planting over 1,200 acres with a yield of 1.8 million pounds of tobacco. That was a high point, but the year also contained a low. Julio also loved airplanes, and a crash that year left him partially paralyzed and kept him away from the farm for an entire year while he recovered.

Despite his accident, nothing could keep Julio down. By 1980 he purchased Perfecto Garcia—the company he had worked for in Tampa—but quickly realized he'd made a mistake and sold it two years later. In the meantime, deciding he preferred life in Honduras on the farm, the Jamastran land came up for sale and he bought it. He planted tobacco once again but a bad experience with a manufacturer who went back on their word about buying tobacco forced Julio in 1985 to become his own factory again to make cigars so he could monetize the tobacco he had grown.

About that time, Justo began his studies in agriculture at the Pan-American Agricultural School (El Zamorano) in Honduras for his Agronomist degree and then graduated from Kansas State with a degree in Agriculture in 1989. Moving

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> Eiroas have farmed tobacco since the early 1900s, first in Cuba, then Honduras, and crafted cigars since 1985; Julio (left) and Justo (right).

back to Honduras, Justo started a bottled water company and continued growing crops on his father's farm. By 1995, Eiroa acquired the company of the late Simon Camacho and moved its operations from Nicaragua to Honduras. With Justo growing his own business, Julio's younger son Christian joined the company in 1998 and soon launched the Camacho brand with his father's Corojo tobacco.

While his brother was more involved with the cigar side, Justo's company continued to grow in Tegucigalpa, but he continued working on the farm, renting land from his father for his own sorghum crops, which he sold. Justo helped with the mechanization of the farm.

By 2007, Justo sold his water bottling company and the following year Julio and Christian sold Camacho to Davidoff. While Justo went off for a master's degree and worked as a research analyst for FIU for the U.S. Southern Command, Julio went back to his farm. He says he sold because the factory was taking up too much of his time...time he needed to devote to his crops.

By 2012, Justo had his master's degree and was working for Campbell Soup, while his younger brother Christian had launched a new cigar company—C.L.E.—along with his own brands.

In 2015, Julio realized he was sitting on a great deal of excellent tobacco. His contract with Davidoff to supply the company with tobacco had fallen through. Julio decided once more to go

into manufacturing and built a small factory (Fabrica de Puros Aladino) on the family's homeland in Jamastran where Aladino, Rancho Luna, and Tatascan come to life with his old proven blends.

He asked Justo to come join him in the new venture, but Justo was establishing a corporate career in Campbell and it was not possible at that time. Julio initially launched his brands in 2015 with C.L.E. at its IPCPR trade show booth.

In 2016 Julio and Justo partnered in JRE Tobacco, not only to establish a company that could focus on properly developing the new brands with the renown successful blends, but also to continue the farming legacy of two farmers in the Jamastran Valley.

Justo explains that Aladino is Spanish for Aladdin and the name of the movie theater in downtown Danlí that the family owned. The idea, he says, is that Aladdin transports you to the time of the Golden Era of Cuban cigars before the embargo, when they were great, which is why all the bands for Aladino carry the years 1947 to 1961. Julio says those were the best years for Cubans and the Cuban tobacco.

The blend is Julio's from the Camacho days—full flavored but not as strong as the old Camachos.

Rancho Luna reminds Justo of his time growing up on the farm when the moon would come up as he was riding his horse and hearing coyotes in the distance. The range is more medium than the Aladino but with great tobacco as well.

Tatascan is another value-priced blend, but with a sweet tip, very reminiscent of Julio's old Baccarat cigar blend.

Last year, JRE Tobacco had its own booth launching the Aladino Maduro and its limited Corojo Reserva line. Debuting last year in a robusto, the cigar is the exact same blend as the old Camacho Diploma from when Julio owned the company, except all of the tobacco is 5-6 years old.

At this year's trade show, Justo is introducing the Rancho Luna Grande series in a 7 x 64 and a 7 x 70 format, retailing between \$7-\$8. JRE also is introducing a new Aladino Connecticut line, proving lighter cigars can have flavor and a touch of strength. It weighs in as a mild-to-medium smoke retailing in the \$7-10 range across in four sizes. JRE will also launch another limited production release, the Aladino Corojo Reserva Toro, again featuring the original Diploma blend.

With Justo helping, Julio still has time for his farm, although this past year he only planted between 80 and 150 acres. Julio says he does not need any more for now. Besides, the weather was perfect for his tobacco and he expects huge wrapper yields from his corojo. Justo says he and his dad are sitting on close to a million pounds of tobacco right now. In all, the farm encompasses nearly 700 acres and over half has drip irrigation. But as demand for the JRE Tobacco product grows, Julio could easily plant 300 acres immediately, ensuring the future of JRE Tobacco for years to come. ■

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The FDA's New Catch-22

The federal agency threatens early enforcement against new tobacco products as it stalls on long-awaited guidance.

>BY BRYAN M. HAYNES

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is threatening to step up enforcement of premarket review requirements for "new tobacco products." At the same time, the Agency is stalling on long-awaited regulations and guidance establishing the boundaries for industry submissions. This untenable situation leaves manufacturers and importers in a regulatory Catch-22, as they apparently are expected to expedite their premarket review submissions but without clear guidance from the FDA.

By way of background, the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (the law giving the FDA authority over tobacco products), establishes premarket review requirements for "new tobacco products," which are products that were introduced or changed after February 15, 2007. Manufacturers seeking to sell "new tobacco products" must first obtain marketing authorization from the FDA. Manufacturers can obtain marketing authorization by: (1)

showing that the sale of the product "is appropriate for the protection of public health" through a premarket tobacco application ("PMTA"), (2) showing that the product does not "raise different questions of public health" through a substantial equivalence ("SE") application, or (3) showing that the product involves a minor modification to a lawfully-marketed product through an exemption from substantial equivalence ("EXSE") application.

When FDA asserted jurisdiction over "deemed" tobacco products—electronic nicotine delivery systems ("ENDS"), pipe tobacco, cigars, and all other products made or derived from tobacco and intended for human consumption) in 2016, it recognized that newly-regulated companies would need some time to prepare premarket submissions for new products. This made sense because many of the newly-deemed tobacco products were also "new tobacco products." This is particularly true for ENDS, which were not widely sold in 2007.

The FDA also seemingly recognized that manufacturers of deemed products would need adequate guidance for their premarket review submissions. When the FDA issued the deeming regulations in 2016, it offered only a draft guidance for PMTAs for ENDS and supplied no guidance for other deemed products. Accordingly, the FDA established extended deadlines for premarket review submissions—until August 2017 for EXSE submissions, June 2019 for SE submissions, and August 2018 for PMTAs. In May 2017, the FDA extended these deadlines by three months.

A few months later, in August 2017, the FDA announced a significant extension of the premarket review deadlines for deemed tobacco products. Manufacturers of combustible products (like cigars) would have until August 2021 to make premarket review submissions and manufacturers of non-combustible products would have until August 2022. The FDA acknowledged that the additional compliance period was necessary for manufacturers to submit more thorough applications based on regulations and guidance to be issued by the Agency. The FDA stated that, during the compliance period, "the agency plans to issue regulations governing the information to be included in premarket applications, to develop standards that certain products must meet, and to publish additional guidance explaining what applications should contain and how they will be reviewed."

As of this writing, the FDA has done none of this. The only guidance or regulation specifically applicable to deemed tobacco products is the May 2016 draft guidance on PMTAs for ENDS. The FDA has recently published for notice and comment a proposed regulation on SE submissions. However, the proposed regulation offers scant guidance for suppliers of deemed tobacco products. For instance, the proposed regulation discusses testing for harmful and potentially harmful constituents ("HHCs") to facilitate a review of whether new products raise "different questions of public health" versus grandfathered products. However, the FDA fails to

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acknowledge that there is no consensus as to how HPHCs should be measured for deemed products, including premium cigars and hookah tobacco. Indeed, this lack of consensus prompted the FDA to recently defer the deadline for HPHC testing and reporting. How is industry supposed to report HPHCs in SE submissions when the FDA has not identified how the products should be tested?

In the meantime, the FDA recently indicated that it intends to significantly modify the premarket review deadlines for certain products. In March 2019, the FDA issued a draft guidance, entitled "Modifications to Compliance Policy for Certain Deemed Tobacco Products." Citing concerns regarding youth access to certain products, the FDA proposed to eliminate the compliance policy for flavored cigars. In other words, any non-grandfathered flavored cigar would be subject to immediate enforcement action unless it obtains FDA marketing authorization. Flavored ENDS (other than tobacco, mint, and menthol) would be subject to enforcement action unless the manufacturer submits a PMTA by August 8, 2021 (effectively moving the compliance date forward a year) and subject to immediate enforcement action unless sold in adult-only locations. As of this writing, the modified compliance policy remains only a draft, but it is reasonable to assume that it could be finalized by the summer of 2019.

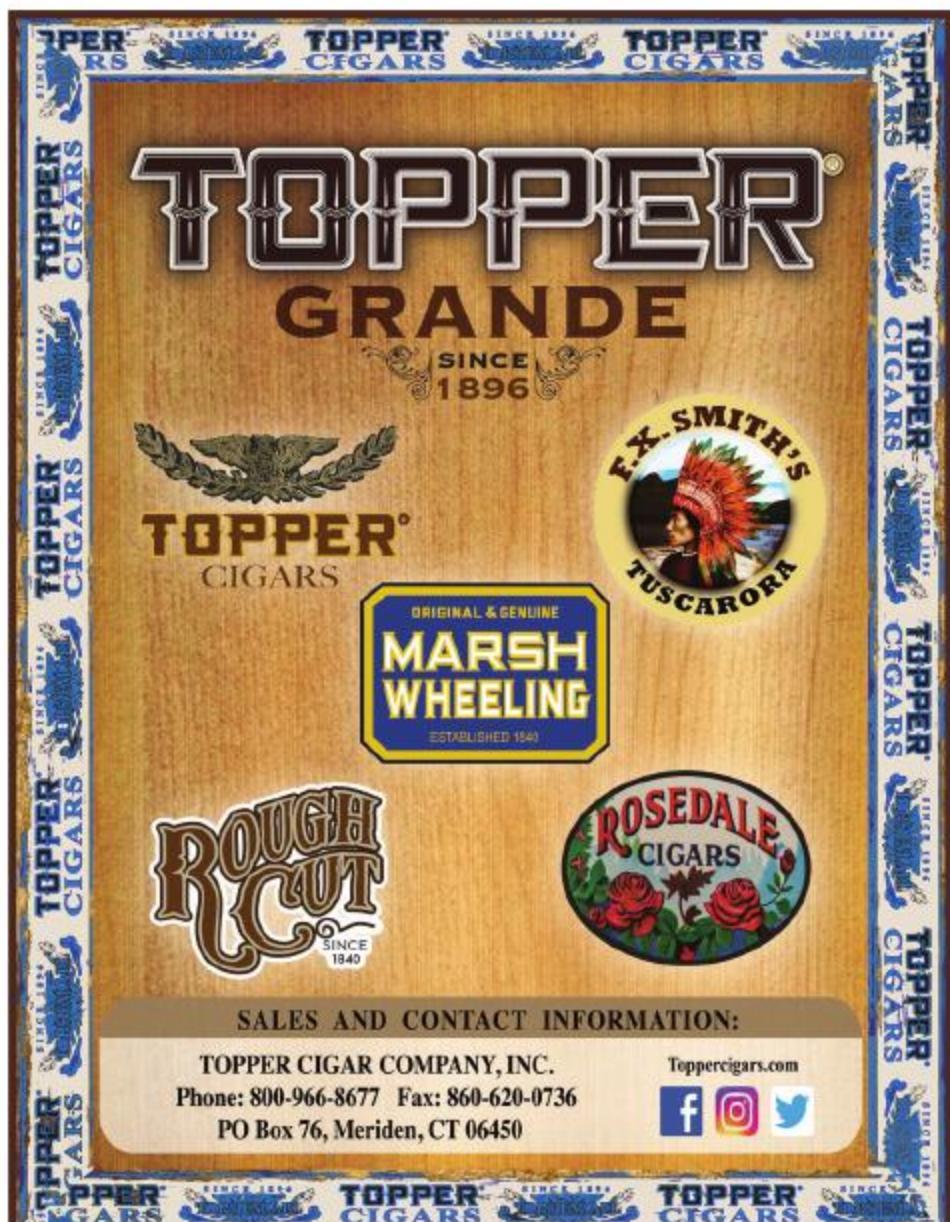
In making these proposed modifications to the compliance policy, the FDA did not address the recognized need to provide more detailed guidance to applicants. It has been nearly two years since the FDA acknowledged that manufacturers of deemed products need more information to

prepare applications. Yet, without having provided any additional information, the agency now apparently expects manufacturers of flavored cigars to immediately submit SE applications. Manufacturers of flavored ENDS (other than tobacco, mint, and menthol) are expected to submit PMTAs in two years or less, yet the FDA still has not finalized its draft guidance for these submissions. This places industry in the untenable position of having to rapidly prepare submissions while making educated guesses about the FDA's expectations for their contents.

Complicating matters further, a federal judge in Maryland has recently ruled that the FDA acted unlawfully when it extended the compliance deadlines in August 2017. The implications of this ruling are unclear at this time, as the court has ordered the parties to submit briefing on the appropriate remedy and the FDA may appeal. But the ruling could further shorten the timelines for manufacturers to file premarket submissions.

One thing is clear—the landscape for premarket review of deemed products is evolving rapidly. Stay tuned for updates (including from our blog—tobaccolawblog.com) as the FDA considers finalizing the modified compliance policy and the industry anxiously awaits more detailed guidance for submissions. **S**

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Envisioning & Embracing Pipe Tobacco's Future

In a fast-changing world, there is ample opportunity to keep pipe tobacco relevant and vibrant, even as use declines. **BY CRAIG WILLIAMSON**

What does the future of pipe tobacco look like? It's a big question, and one that I suggest has more bright spots than one might initially suspect.

Much has been written about how new regulations from the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) are impacting the tobacco industry at large. In February of 2018, I wrote a detailed article in *Smokeshop* about how FDA's draconian and onerous regulations were impacting pipe tobacco specifically. That column is every bit as relevant today as it was a year ago.

There are also a number of other challenges facing the pipe tobacco industry. Overall, volume is declining as patterns of consumer consumption change and the retail landscape shifts rapidly.

But, pipe tobacco is a resilient tradition that survived the industrial revolution, world wars, global depressions, and the advent of the Internet.

It is up to leaders in the pipe tobacco industry to take on these challenges, adapt, and turn what appear to be negatives into positives for our industry and our future. If we renew our entrepreneurial mindset and seek out opportunities, we will soon find that the future of pipe tobacco is bright.

Let's start with consumption. Volume is declining about 10 percent per year. But, that's not necessarily bad news. There is ample evidence, both empirical and anecdotal, that there are plenty of new consumers. We have seen a net increase in pipe tobacco consumers in recent years.

It is true that these new users are never going to consume as much product. They simply do not use pipe tobacco the way previous generations did.

Older consumers were more brand loyal and did not experiment with their products. They smoked what their father smoked, because it's what his father smoked.

These new enthusiasts skew much younger. They are 30 to 45 years old, and look more like a wine or craft beer consumer. They are more interested in "what is new" and "what can I try?"

The industry has an opportunity to adapt to that with new marketing techniques that emphasize retention through a variety of product offerings. While these consumers are less brand loyal, they are also more brand social, willing to share and promote new products they try on social media.

This demographic cohort is also inspiring a growing phenomenon of Amer-

ican craftsmen producing beautiful pipes and accessories that in many cases can only be described as works of art. It is not hard to find "craftsmen" pipe makers turning out tobacco pipes that cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000.

These products become collectibles and hobbies in and of themselves that keep people directly linked to the pipe tobacco industry.

When you combine a changing demographic with FDA regulations, it's obvious to see that pipe tobacco is being squeezed at the retail level. Ultimately, the main place for consumers will be tobacconists, cigarette stores, and on-line platforms.

Succeeding in this environment will require better marketing, better products, and a better understanding of what consumers want. The opportunity for evolution and adaption is plentiful.

Navigating the next few years, or decades, means the pipe tobacco industry must rediscover a sense of entrepreneurial spirit and seek out opportunities—like younger consumers who want to try a wider variety of products, but are more willing to socialize and share, or like the resurgence in pipe craftsmen producing beautiful works of art that will last for generations.



Photos courtesy of Vauen Pipes.

Change is daunting, and often intimidating. But in the case of pipe tobacco, change brings a brighter future that we can all embrace.

The Cigar Association of America will continue to work closely with its members and allies in the pipe tobacco industry to protect this rich and vibrant industry. **S**

Craig Williamson is president of the Cigar Association of America, Tel: (202) 223-8204, Web: cigarassociation.org.



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Rossi Pipes of Italy Adds 13-Shape Notte Series

With an impressive range of unique Italian shapes, reliable engineering, and sophisticated finishes, Barasso, Italy-based Rossi pipes offer one of the best values in the industry, for both retailers and their customers alike. Rossi's newest addition to their catalog, the Notte, is no exception.

The Notte line comprises 13 popular shapes, and features dark, smoky finishes with sleek black acrylic stems that won't oxidize, and classy brass accents, offering a charming, tasteful style.

Suggested retail price, \$80.



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John Contton's Double Pressed Virginia, Kentucky

Tobacco blender Russ Ouellette continues to broaden the range of the revived legendary Scottish tobacco brand John Cotton's with two new "double pressed" mixtures that join the six blends he's already ushered to market.

Produced at Sutliff Tobacco, Inc., in Richmond, Va., these latest blends utilize a unique production process. "To our knowledge, no one has ever done a double pressed process before," stated Sutliff Tobacco in announcing the new additions.



John Cotton's Double Pressed Virginia solves the unwanted "bite" that compels some pipe smokers to avoid Virginias. A blend of sweet Virginias is first pressed and then sliced into a flake. It's then tumbled into a ribbon, allowed to breathe, and put back into the mold to be pressed again into a crumble cake. This darkens the leaf, gives it a deeper, richer flavor, and takes much of the "edge" off the blend, resulting in a Virginia that just about anyone can enjoy. John Cotton's Double Pressed Virginia was the winner of the Chicagoland Pipe & Tobacciana Expo's 2019 Chicago Bowl for "Best Virginia Flake."

John Cotton's Double Pressed Kentucky utilizes the same production process but starts with smoky dark-fired Kentucky blended with sweet Virginias. The double pressed method produces a second maturation cycle which deepens the flavor and takes any sharp edges off the blend.

Both blends are presented in 1.75 oz tins, suggested retail \$20.

Meier & Dutch, Bethlehem, Pa., Toll-free: (888) 872-4427, Web: meierdutch.com.



> Kevin Dinkins, director of operations, Sutliff Tobacco (left) and tobacco blender Russ Ouellette (right), Pipes & Tobacco/STG.



Mac Baren Adds Amphora Burley, Kentucky Blends

The newest offerings from Svendborg, Denmark-based Mac Baren Tobacco Company are under the company's esteemed Amphora range of classic Dutch Cavendish blends that date to 1860 and returned to the U.S. market in 2016.

Amphora Burley Blend is a well-balanced Burley-dominant mixture incorporating dark fired Kentucky and Virginias "blended expressly to delight Burley lovers." non-cased, smooth, and presented in a ready rubbed cut mixture.

Amphora Kentucky Blend features a large proportion of dark-fired Kentucky, blended with high-grade Virginia tobaccos to achieve the solid and smoke taste of the Kentucky tobaccos.

The two blends join the continuously expanding range of Amphora tobaccos that were first reintroduced into the U.S. market by Sutliff Tobacco Company; other offerings include Original, Full Aroma, Virginia, and Special Reserve Black Cavendish.

Amphora blends are packed in 1.75 oz. resealable pouches.

Sutliff Tobacco/Mac Baren, Richmond, Va., Tel: (704) 796-3520, Web: sutliff-tobacco.com.

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► Arango Cigar Co. adds Arango Sportsman Jamocha

Arango Cigar Co. has announced the release of Arango Sportsman Jamocha, the latest flavor combination in the Arango Sportsman line. These affordable and delightful cigars are hand made in Nicaragua and offer an enticing combination of coffee, espresso, and chocolate.



"Arango Sportsman was originally introduced in 1984 as one of the first full line cigars to offer a subtle vanilla aromatic blend," says Mike Gold, president of Arango Cigar Co. "This recognized and well-known brand has now expanded to include Arango Sportsman Jamocha, a new mellow smoking treat."

Arango Sportsman Jamocha is offered in three sizes, packed 20 cigars to a bundle. The Lonsdale (6 x 44) wholesales for \$1.80 per cigar, the Toro (6 x 50) for \$1, and the Torpedo (6 x 54) for \$2.

Arango Cigar Co., Northbrook, Ill., Toll-free: (800) 222-4427, Email: sales@arangocigarco.com, Web: arangocigarco.com

► Manitou 100% Tobacco Super Premium Cigarettes

Premier Manufacturing—the consumer products division of Raleigh, N.C.-based U.S. Tobacco Cooperative, Inc. (USTC)—is introducing a new entry in the super-premium cigarette category with the launch of Manitou, which contains only water and 100 percent company-grown flue-cured tobacco from the southeastern United States.

Virtually all other American cigarette brands are made using a blend of flue-cured, burley, and oriental tobaccos. To make Manitou a uniquely premium product, only the finest whole leaf flue-cured tobaccos, picked from the upper stalk position of the plant, are used, resulting in "the best flavor experience," according to Premier. Manitou cigarettes contain no reconstituted sheet tobacco, stems, or fillers, nor any additives or artificial flavors, and are 100 percent free from chemical additives like artificial preservatives, humectants, or synthetic flavors commonly found in other brands.

"The packaging designs combine bold color combinations and finishing treatments that elevate the brand," says Russ Mancuso, USTC's senior vice president, consumer products. "Each pack and carton have embossed textures and a special sand varnish applied to the edges to let the adult consumer know they are holding something different."

Manitou is available in six different king size styles: Manitou No. 5 (bright-mellow taste); Manitou No. 6 (bright full-bodied taste); Manitou No. 7 (smooth mellow taste); Manitou No. 8 (smooth rich mellow taste); Manitou No. 9 (full-bodied mellow taste); and Manitou No. 10 (dark rich mellow taste).

A full marketing campaign promoting the brand will roll out soon and include POS materials, print ads, a website to educate and engage the consumer, and more.

Premier Manufacturing, Inc., Chesterfield, Mo., Tel: (636) 537-6800, Web: gopremier.com, usleaf.com.



► La Aurora Adds Original Blends Maduro 1985

Two years ago, La Aurora Original Blends debuted in the market as a "top-quality product for incredible value," posting "spectacular growth" and becoming an authentic volume brand for the oldest Dominican Republic

cigar maker, the company stated.

This tremendous growth has stimulated demand for new La Aurora product lines, resulting in

the company's latest release, **La Aurora Original Blends Maduro 1985**.

"La Aurora 1985 opens with a rich mineral earth flavor with gentle touches of pepper. Almond notes step into the fold alongside sweet dried fruit flavors mixed with an elegant dark chocolate panache. Notes of coffee cream are present, but are subtle compared to the tropical fruit notes that stamp the finish," says the manufacturer.

The cigars feature Nicaraguan filler and binder with a Brazilian wrapper. Four sizes are available—Toro (5 3/4 x 54), \$6 each suggested retail; Churchill (7 x 47), \$6 each; Robusto (5 x 50), \$5.75 each; and Gran Toro (6 x 58), \$6.25 each.

La Aurora, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic, Web: laaurora.com.do; distributed in the U.S. by **Miami Cigar & Company**, Miami, Fla., Tel: (305) 599-3395, Web: miamicigarcompany.com.





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► JRE Tobacco Launches Aladino Connecticut, Aladino Maduro Corona Box-Pressed

JRE Tobacco is launching **Aladino Connecticut**, featuring a Connecticut Ecuador wrapper surrounding a Honduran binder and filler blend. The mild to medium will be offered in Queens Perfecto (5 1/4 x 46), Robusto (5 x 50), Toro (6 x 50), and Churchill (7 x 52) formats, retailing from \$6.80 to \$9.80 per stick.

Also on tap is the **Aladino Maduro** in a Corona box-pressed (5 x 44) format, with a binder and filler blend of corojo Honduras with a Mexican San Andres wrapper, suggested retail \$6.50.

Finally, a limited production **Aladino Reserva Toro** (6 x 52), a puro made from 100 percent authentic corojo Honduras, is being released, suggested retail \$14. Like last year's **Aladino Reserva Robusto**, these cigars are distributed to retail accounts by allocation only, in limited quantities.

JRE Tobacco, Miami, Fla., Tel: (305) 222-0837, Web: jretobacco.com.



White Owl Mini Cigarillos Launched

Swedish Match has launched a new, smaller version of its White Owl Cigarillos, packing "the same quality and flavor consumers expect from White Owl into the new White Owl Mini Cigarillos. Each resealable pouch contains three mini cigarillos, which are shorter and thinner than regular White Owl cigarillos "but aren't short on taste."

"The Mini cigarillo segment has experienced double digit growth over the past five years, with most growth coming from mini pouches," said Katherine Macomber, senior brand manager, cigars for Swedish Match. "The well-established White Owl brand was a natural fit for the segment. We anticipate White Owl Mini's competitive price point, high value, and outstanding quality will continue growth in the segment while providing much needed innovation."

Four flavors are offered: Sweets, Silver, and two new flavors for the category—White Grape and Blue Raspberry—further driving excitement and delivering on consumer demand.

"Our Sweets and Silver options align with the top segment flavors, while White Grape and Blue Raspberry performed well in consumer testing but have never been seen in this space added Macomber.

White Owl Mini Cigarillos are available in a competitive "3 for \$1.29" format as well as a "Save on 3" package that allows for retail pricing flexibility.

Swedish Match U.S. Division, Richmond, Va., Tel: (804) 787-5100, Web: whiteowlcigar.com.

► J.C. Newman Launches The American, 100% American-Sourced and Made Premium Cigar

The American from J.C. Newman launched to the public on May 31 at two simultaneous events in Florida. These luxury cigars are hand rolled by Americans in the company's Tampa cigar factory using heirloom American cigar tobaccos. The boxes, bands, labels, cigar molds, cellophane tubes, and all other parts of this unique project are all made in the United States as well, making it the first "100% American cigar."

"The American speaks to the heart of who we are: a four-generation, 124-year-old, American family business," said Drew Newman, great-grandson of company founder J.C. Newman. "Our country's rich premium cigar tradition dates to the Colonial Era. As an American, I wanted to prove that we could hand roll a world-class cigar in the United States using American tobaccos. I am thrilled that we have created an outstanding all-American cigar."

The American is the first cigar rolled with Florida Sun Grown wrapper, grown by Corona Cigar Co.'s Jeff Borysiewicz in Clermont, Fla. The binder is Connecticut Broadleaf grown by eighth-generation family farmer Jon Foster, and the filler is a blend of Foster's Connecticut Havana tobacco with tobaccos grown by Mennonite farmers in Lancaster county, Penn.

Said Borysiewicz, "A hundred years ago, it was commonplace for Florida-grown tobacco to be rolled into cigars in Tampa's numerous cigar factories. We are proud to be working with the Newman family to bring back this long-lost cigar-making tradition after a 50 year hiatus."

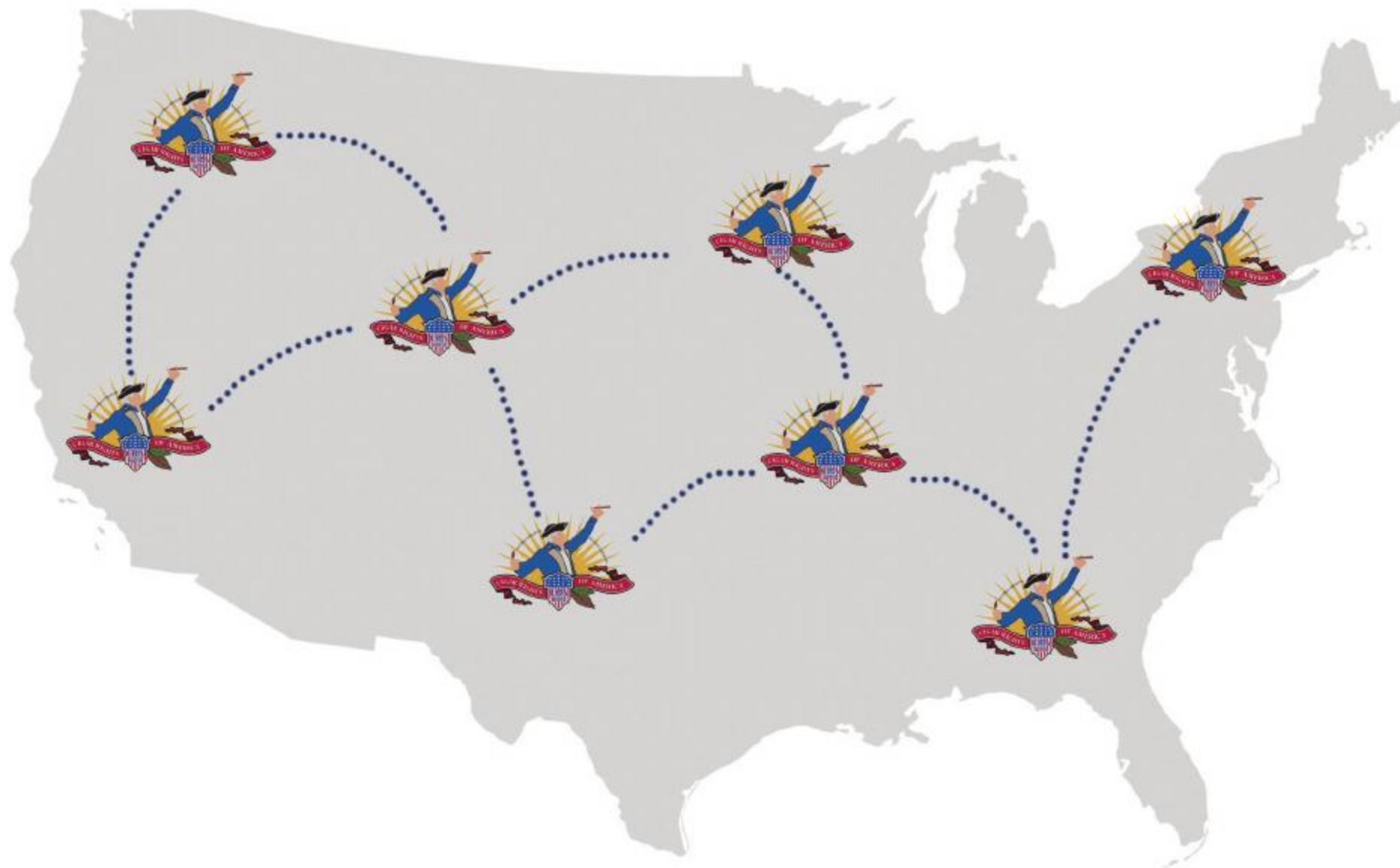
The American was the first brand of cigars rolled in J.C. Newman's El Reloj factory when it opened in 1910 in Ybor City, Fla. J.C. Newman has recreated this historic brand in El Reloj to celebrate J.C. Newman's 125th anniversary in 2020.

The American will initially be released in four sizes and in boxes of 20 with a suggested retail price of between \$16 and \$19.50.

J.C. Newman Cigar Co., Tampa, Fla., Tel: (813) 248-2124, Web: jcnewman.com.



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- George 'Shorty' Koebel, Owner of Havana Connections in Richmond, Virginia

"Our businesses need all of the marketing exposure possible, and with CRA appealing to a national audience, this is well worth the cost. I also like the fact that we can have some input on issues affecting the industry."

- Joel Schwartz, Owner of Ford & Haig Tobacconists in Scottsdale, Arizona

"This can be a great way to highlight store events, especially when new cigars are coming onto the market. When the manufacturers are in our shop, this can be a way to reach a broader audience than just those that walk into the store, or that we see on a regular basis."

- Julie Neumann, Owner of Cigars & More in Libertyville, Illinois



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► Nat Sherman International Unveils Epoca Reserva

Nat Sherman International has launched an addition to their Epoca brand with the release of Epoca Reserva, a collection of five traditional sizes packed in boxes of 24 cigars, and one unique Super Lancero available in boxes of ten cigars. The cigars are hand-made in the Dominican Republic, featuring well-aged Nicaraguan and Dominican long-fillers, a Dominican binder, and a "stunning" Dominican-grown wrapper.

"It is much richer and fuller-bodied than our classic Epoca blend," said Michael Herklots, vice president of Nat Sherman International, "but still quite complex and refined."

Epoca made its return to the American market in 2014. Once owned by the company's eponymous founder, Nat Sherman, it was a popular brand in America in the early part of the 20th century, originally made in New York City as a 'Clear Havana' using Cuban tobaccos and a domestic wrapper. Today, Epoca replicates the look, feel, and taste of what the brand once was.

"This is the final step in the brand realignment project we successfully executed in 2018," Herklots added. "Formerly known as 'Nat Sherman 1930,' these incredible cigars will surely suit the Epoca brand well and set it up for continued growth for the long term. The blends remain unchanged from their original version and will share the same vitola names as they did under the 1930 brand."

The cigars range in price from \$9.95 to \$17 per cigar and began shipping to retailers in late spring.

Nat Sherman Intl., Englewood, N.J., Tel: (201) 735-9000, Web: natsherman.com.



► Ventura Cigar Adds Psyko Seven Nicaragua by Indiana Ortez

Ventura Cigar Company has teamed up with rising cigar industry star Indiana Ortez, daughter of industry icon Omar Ortez, to create the latest addition to its Psyko Seven brand with the launch of **Psyko Seven Nicaragua by Indiana Ortez**.

The collaboration offers a "fresh, bold point of view" from the young blender, says Ventura Cigar.

Ortez was also the master blender behind Ventura Cigar's Fathers,

Friends, and Fire limited edition cigar released in spring 2018.

Bold and complex, Psyko Seven Nicaragua offers "rich, nuanced flavors" that constantly evolve throughout the smoking experience. Hand rolled in the Ortez factory in Condega Nicaragua, it is wrapped in a 2007 vintage Desflorada wrapper.

"Whenever you want to create a new blend, you need to depend on your intuition," says Ortez. "It's like a recipe. You can't force making something that's truly great. If you enjoy the process as you go through it, your intuition will guide you."

Michael Giannini, general manager at Ventura Cigar Company, says "Indiana has such vision. She has a genuine, organic understanding for the nuances of tobacco, and knows how to bring it to life so the smoke can be enjoyed to the fullest."

Psyko Seven Nicaragua is available in three sizes, each presented in 20-count boxes: Gordo (6 x 60), Robusto (5 x 50), and Toro (6 x 50). It joins other the Psyko Seven Natural, Maduro, and Connecticut blends, which feature "unexpected juxtapositions of flavor and boldness."

Ventura Cigar Co., Moorpark, Calif., Email: webinfo@venturacigar.com, Web: venturacigar.com.



► Diesel Hair of the Dog from General Cigar

General Cigar Company's Diesel brand has rolled out Hair of the Dog, a limited-edition release developed by A.J. Fernandez with senior brand manager Justin Andrews and made at Tabacalera A.J. Fernandez in Estelí, Nicaragua. Diesel Hair of the Dog is a medium-to-full-bodied smoke with "earthy flavor, notes of pepper, and a heady aroma." The blend is made entirely of Nicaraguan Habano, which is balanced by an Ecuadorian Habano wrapper and an Ecuadorian Sumatra binder.

"Diesel Hair of the Dog was blended to have just the right amount of kick," said Andrews. "It's not an overly powerful cigar, yet it really delivers on the flavor. For the cigar lover who's looking for the 'hair of a dog' after a night of over-indulgence, or for anyone who seeks the complexity of Nicaraguan tobacco, Hair of the Dog is definitely going to do the trick."

The cigar is available in a single size—a box-pressed Toro (6" x 54). The SRP per cigar is \$10 and the cigars are packed rustic wooden boxes, each containing 10 cigars. Just 5,000 boxes have been produced.

Hair of the Dog complements Diesel Whiskey Row, a top-selling cigar launched last year in partnership with Louisville, Kentucky-based Rabbit Hole Bourbon.

General Cigar Company, Glen Allen, Va., Tel: (804) 935-2809, Web: dieselcigar.com, cigarworld.com.

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► Debut United Series Unidas—Hammer & Sickle—Now Shipping

United Cigars has announced the launch of a new collaboration series, inspired by the success of its Firecracker Limited Releases which featured partnerships with different factories.

Development of the first United Series Unidas began in early 2018, but came to an abrupt halt when Eric Hanson, president of Hammer + Sickle Cigars, passed away. "The cigars were made and packaging ideas discussed, but after Eric's passing everything was put on hold," stated Erik Wentworth, executive vice president of Hammer + Sickle Cigars. "These cigars have been resting for over one year now and have aged beautifully."

In January, Wentworth and Oliver Nivaud, director of sales and marketing for United Cigars, continued what Hanson had started and brought the project to fruition. Said Nivaud, "To have had the chance to work with Hanson on this was reward enough—he was an incredibly talented man with the driest sense of humor. But to see this finalized and ready for market is amazing."

The blend was derived from Hanson's palette of his favorite tobaccos from the Davidoff factory in the Dominican Republic to maintain the characteristic Hammer + Sickle profile, but with a United Cigar kick. The boxes of 20 feature both company's logos and introduce a new tamper-proof security measure with the zip tie. Only 300 boxes of the 6 3/4 x 46 cigar have been made and retail for \$180 per box, \$9 per cigar, and are currently shipping.

United Cigar Group, Nashua, N.H., Tel: (603) 891-4022, Web: UnitedCigarGroup.com.



Montecristo Classic Now in Mini Cigarillo

Altadis U.S.A. has reinvented a timeless product, offering the Montecristo Classic as a Mini Cigarillo in a stylish tin carrying case.

The Montecristo Classic Mini Cigarillo boasts the same Connecticut shade wrapper and premium Dominican fillers as the award-winning original, but in a format that consumers can enjoy during a 10-minute coffee break.

"The idea for a Montecristo Mini Cigarillo comes from our desire for a quality cigar experience even when time is short," explains Eddy Guerra, Altadis U.S.A.'s senior brand manager. "Just because you don't have a lot of time, doesn't mean you can't enjoy a beautiful cigar experience."

The Montecristo Classic Mini Cigarillo is offered in a convenient 20-count tin with a suggested retail price of \$13.75.

Altadis U.S.A., Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., Tel: (954) 772-9000, altadisusa.com.

Limited Edition Blue in Green Corona

Gran Habano has announced the addition of the 6 x 44 Corona size to its Blue in Green line, a limited production release with only 1,000 boxes being manufactured in this size. It is scheduled to be available for shipping in August 2019, retailing for \$9 per stick and presented in 20-count boxes. Regular production vitolas include the 7 x 48 Churchill, 5 x 52 Robusto, and 6 x 54 Gran Robusto sizes, all featuring the same Nicaraguan filler blend, Nicaraguan binder, and Connecticut wrapper and produced at the company's own G.R. Tabacaleras Unidas, S.A. factory in Honduras.

Gran Habano, Doral, Fla., Tel: (305) 436-5960, Web: ghcigars.com.



SMOKE THE CIGAR REVIEW

90 CATTLE BARON STOCKYARD

Cattle Baron Cigars



	COMMENTS	BACKGROUND	ORIGIN
AESTHETICS	A very good-looking cigar. The wrapper looks to be a light Havana, few veins. It is very silky to the touch. The color is medium brown and the roll looks perfect.	When Montana cattle rancher Bryan Mussard, a cigar lover for over 30 years who raises some of the world's finest, high marbling Angus bulls, crossed paths with cigar maker Phil Zanghi of House of Debonaire, he knew he'd found the perfect partner to fulfill his dream of creating a custom, world-class cigar. After two years perfecting the final blend, Cattle Baron debuted in 2016 and is currently available in five sizes ranging from 4 to 6 inches in length, and 36 to 58 ring gauge. Mussard also created Gorgeous, a highly rated potato vodka.	Dominican Republic
CONSTRUCTION	The cigar is firm. It is not overfilled and has a good draw. After lighting, it produced a razor sharp burn. Although it needed to be touched up a few times, it smoked slow and steady. Its medium gray, striped ash held well.		MAKER House of Debonaire
FLAVOR AND STRENGTH	The flavors are very pleasant. Not a trace of heat or bitterness here. It is a mild plus to medium in strength. Very accessible to any smoker yet not too light. It pairs very well with morning coffee, but also as an after dinner smoke. Notes of leather dominate, with hints of wood, mocha, and pepper throughout.		FILLER Dominican Seco, Nicaraguan Viso
GENERAL COMMENTS	The flavor holds your interest while providing ample smoke. A very enjoyable cigar with subtle transitions as it progresses. I would describe the flavors and overall experience as a "classic" flavor profile—not wild, but solid and refined.		BINDER Dominican
			WRAPPER Nicaraguan Habano
			SIZE 5 x 52
			PRICE \$8.75

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eWestern, Inc., Spokane, Wa., Tel: (509)-483-2222, Email: info@ewestern.com, Web: ewesterninc.com.

>New Designs Added to Quality Importers' Humidor Supreme Series

Quality Importers Trading Company's Humidor Supreme humidors are completely lined with premium kiln-dried Spanish cedar and feature the company's SureSeal Technology to ensure proper lid seal on closure. Humidors also feature a scratch-resistant felt-lined bottom, gold-plated hidden quadrant hinges, engravable brass nameplate, glass hygrometer, and one round or rectangular humidifier. These newest 100-cigar capacity units measure 15" wide by 10" deep by 6 1/2" high and are equipped with a Spanish cedar tray with two dividers. Choose from five new designs: Red Line FD (fire department), Blue Line PD (police department), Fighter Jet, Soldier Strong, and Music Series



1 Piano. Suggested retail, \$159.99. Also available is Black Marble, a 25-cigar capacity model that measures 12 1/2" wide by 8 3/4" deep by 4 1/2" high, suggested retail \$99.99. **Quality Importers Trading Company**, Weston, Fla., Toll-free: (888) 795-4839, Email: sales@QualityImporters.com, Web: QualityImporters.com.



>HP3 High Performance Triple Jet Lighters from Xikar

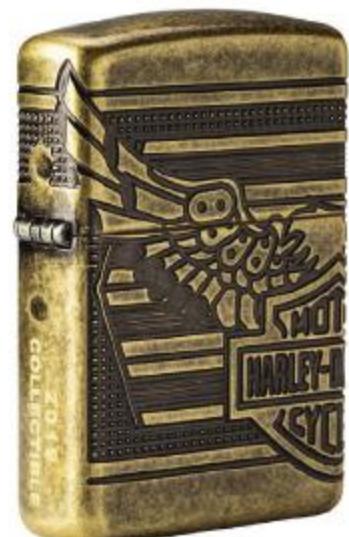
The streamlined appearance of the High Performance Triple Jet Flame Lighter (HP3) from Xikar is engineered for performance and precision. The trademarked, oversized double EZ-View red fuel window allow users to easily inspect the remaining butane levels in the tank, while a quick turn of the oversized adjustment wheel, centrally located at the base of the lighter, allows users to fine-tune the desired flame height. The series is available

in a choice of four finishes: Matte Black, G2, Daytona Red, and Burnt Yellow. Suggested retail, \$99.99.

Xikar, Inc., Weston, Fla., Toll Free: (866) 676-7380, Email: info@xikar.com, Web: xikar.com.

> Harley-Davidson 2019 Collectible from Zippo in Armor Brass Finish

The 2019 Harley-Davidson Collectible from Zippo features the unmistakable Harley-Davidson shield backed by an American Bald Eagle with stylized wings resembling riveted tailpipes, and gears that wrap around the front, sides, and back of the lighter. The all-metal construction is about 1-1/2 times as thick as a standard Zippo case, while the Armor Antique Brass finish highlights every design detail and texture created by Zippo's Multi Cut process. This genuine Zippo windproof lighter with distinctive Zippo "click" features the classic windproof design that works virtually anywhere. Made in the USA, it comes with a lifetime guarantee that "it works or we fix it free." Includes gift box. Suggested retail, \$135.



Zippo Manufacturing Co., Bradford, Pa., Tel: (814) 368-2700, Web: zippo.com.



> Cigar Oasis to Outsource Wi-Fi Functions of 3rd Gen SmartHumidors

The newly designed Cigar Oasis 3.0 humidifiers started shipping in October of 2018. Each of the four models have been updated with enhanced features including enlarged back-lit LCD's, soft-touch buttons, streamlined ribbon/micro-USB connections and more, offering the latest technology to integrate with aficionado's best cigars.

One of the significant updates was including the Wi-Fi capability built-in with the humidifier (previously sold as an attachment for \$119) to be used with an optional subscription-based smartphone app. Having the Wi-Fi built-in allows for a more seamless setup and connectivity process. While most customers have successfully set up their Wi-Fi with the new SmartHumidor app, many have been experiencing issues with both setup and staying connected.

"Our development team has been and continues to work full time on addressing each of these issues and has resolved many of them, but the setup and app performance is still leaving some users not connected and frustrated," the company explained in a statement. To correct these issues, Cigar Oasis is taking several immediate steps.

First, the company is in the process of moving the entire Wi-Fi component to a third party tech firm best suited to build, oversee, manage, and support the entire process from setup to subscription and alerts. Previously, those functions were handled in-house, with only particular pieces outsourced.

Secondly, the free trial period on the app has been changed from 30 days to 6 months for new devices. All users with current non-communicating devices enrolled in subscriptions can call the company for a refund on the subscription costs.

"While all the primary humidifier functions are performing better than ever, our goal at Cigar Oasis is always to bring the maximum value to our customers and we will continue working on the app setup and user experience until it is as stellar and seamless as the humidification itself."

Cigar Oasis LLC, Farmingdale, N.Y., Tel: (516) 520-5258, Web: cigaroasis.com.

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